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The Roll Call of Faith

Rev. C. D. Bell





THE ROLL-CALL OF FAITH.

THE
ROLL-CALL OF FAITH.

BY THE

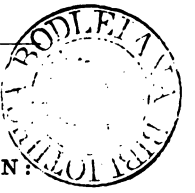
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THE ROLL-CALL OF FAITH.

I.

Introductory.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."—HEBREWS xi. 1, 2, 3.

THE Jewish Christians had been called to endure a great fight of afflictions. Many of them had been "cast out of the synagogue," and excommunicated from the solemnities of the ancient worship. They suffered persecution for the name of Christ; had been separated from all that was dear to them, and had "taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods." They were now beginning to falter. They were forsaking the Christian assemblies. They were in

danger of apostasy. To confirm his vacillating brethren, the writer of this Epistle calls up the most glorious names of Hebrew history, and shows how conspicuous they had been for their invincible faith in the Divine Word. In the preceding chapter he assures the Hebrews that the only means whereby they can be kept steadfast in their profession of the Gospel, is the exercise of faith. All the saints of former generations had been remarkable for this grace; and he produces evidence to prove that faith is able still to make men valiant for the truth in the face of danger and disaster. He gives in this chapter a definition of faith in general, and then demonstrates that it can sustain the soul in hardship, and nerve it in suffering; and this he does by directing their attention to a muster-roll of heroes,—warriors, prophets, martyrs, shepherds, Kings, statesmen,—all of whom won God's approbation, and wrought mighty deeds through faith. These examples he selects from a long period of time, beginning with the first martyr, and ending with the close of the Church polity under the Old Testament, embracing a term of 4,000 years. From the history of these ancient worthies he illustrates the truth, that the only

actuating principle of Godliness has been in all ages, and in all dispensations the same: viz., that principle of faith which relies on the Divine Word, and embraces the Divine promise. The inference he draws from the records of what faith has achieved, and the effect he would have these records to produce in those to whom he is writing, is summed up at the beginning of the 12th chapter: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Bear in mind that the Apostle, throughout his argument, is *not* speaking of *faith* as *justifying*, but of *the influence of faith* over them that are justified,—of *the perseverance which it ensures*, the *patience* it calls forth, and the *victory* it obtains. The chapter before us is rich in illus-

trations of faith's invincible power, and thus provides an ample fund of interest and instruction. I shall, God willing, direct your attention in succession to these examples; and show you how, through the same grace imparted, *we* may become, "through faith and patience," "followers of them who . . . inherit the promises."

I shall confine myself on the present occasion to the three verses which have been read. The Apostle gives, in the first verse, a definition of justifying faith, as it is effectual in enabling the believer to hold fast his profession firm unto the end. By justifying faith, I mean such a heartfelt belief in God and in His Son,—such a steadfast conviction of the truth of all that the Holy Ghost has revealed, as shall shed an influence over our whole life, and spread like leaven through every part of our nature. The Apostle's definition consists of two parts: "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" Each of these clauses has its own peculiar significance. First, "*The substance of things hoped for.*"

Now, "things hoped for" are not things of present enjoyment,—they would cease to be matters of hope if they were already ours; for

"hope that is seen is not hope,—for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" What is in possession, is no longer in prospect: we may enjoy the prospect, but not the things themselves. But "faith," saith the Apostle, gives a substance to these things: takes them out of the region of doubt and speculation, and brings them into that of real actual fact. It makes the promises our own, and gives them a reality as true as that which belongs to the things we can see, and feel, and handle; so that the believer can comprehend their worth, and understand something of the joy which will be his when he arrives at the fulness of actual possession.

Let us see what the things are which the believer "hopes for," and of which his "faith" is "the substance." They are the things promised in the Word of God. Upon these his heart is set, and his expectation rests. His soul thirsteth after their attainment, even "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks." These objects of his hope are,—the blessings that accompany salvation; God's favour; the privileges of adoption; the assurance of the heavenly glory. They are indeed things immeasurable, inexhaustible, and more than commensurate

with man's capacities for happiness, even when stretched to the utmost. The "things hoped for" are joys which have been purchased by the agony and passion of the Son of God, and which are secured to us by His ever-living and all-prevailing intercession. The "things hoped for" are blessings pure, lofty, spiritual, permanent,—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,"—things "prepared" and "reserved," which, in their full measure, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." These things the soul embraces as its choicest blessings, and as immeasurably preferable to any good already in possession. And though they are still future as to their actual enjoyment, yet faith gives to them such a reality that they may be said in a sense to be ours now; and thus when we believe the promises of God unreservedly, and receive them undoubtingly, our faith becomes, according to the Apostle's definition, "the substance of things hoped for."

But, again, "faith is.... the evidence of things not seen."

By "things not seen," the Apostle means all those things which are not objects of sense, but

which ought to have an influence on our life and conduct; in a word, all spiritual and eternal realities which are promised or threatened in the Word of God. "Faith" is the conviction of things unseen, whereby the mind has a confident persuasion of truths revealed on the sole authority of God, whereby it has a satisfactory evidence of these truths, as if they were placed substantially before the eyes. The man who believes, not with that historical faith which is a mere barren, uninfluential assent, but with that living faith of the heart which fastens on God's promises, and builds on them for everlasting happiness,—he has such a persuasion of things unseen, that the invisible acts upon him with the same force as that which is visible. He that believes in the Word of the ever-living God is just as sure of the fulfilment of the Divine promises and threatenings as if their subject-matter were made objects of sense; so that he is content to "walk by faith," and not by sight: his whole life ruled and influenced by the unseen. He that truly believes in that wondrous plan of salvation devised by the Father, and wrought out by the Son, realizes the mysteries of Calvary as vividly, perhaps more intelligently,

than if with bodily eyes he had seen Jesus "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree." And so "the love of Christ constrains him to live not unto himself, but unto Him who died for him, and rose again." "Whether he lives, he lives unto the Lord; or whether he dies, he dies unto the Lord; so that living or dying he is the Lord's." Thus do "the things which are not seen" possess the energy of "the things that are seen." Faith does not indeed make them visible; but it makes the believer feel as certain about them *as if they were visible;* and therefore brings it to pass that an unseen Saviour has all the influence of a seen and known Friend. A future and threatened evil has all the power of deterring from sin: a future and promised good all the power of animating to holiness.

Thus faith is not only "The substance of things hoped for," but also "the evidence of things not seen."

The Apostle proceeds to illustrate his definition by certain notable examples. "By it," he saith, in the second verse, "the elders obtained a good report;" or, as the words may be translated, "were well witnessed unto."

By "the elders" are to be understood the

faithful of ancient times,—the righteous men of old, from the giving of the first promise unto the close of the Old Testament dispensation. He afterwards mentions many of them by name, beginning with Abel, and ending with those worthies who, in the latter days of the Jewish Church, endured the loss of all things, suffered the most cruel tortures, and the most horrible deaths for their championship of the truth. Of these saints of the earlier dispensations the Apostle declares they "all obtained a good report through faith." That is, they received a testimony or witness from God Himself, in some signal acceptance of their persons, some marked manifestation of approbation vouchsafed, combined with a Scripture testimony to their worth, that through this grace of faith they walked with God, worshipped God, and were accepted in His sight. By the world they were defamed, reproached, reviled, "made a gazing stock," as the Apostle states, "both by reproaches and afflictions;" in the eyes of God they were held in high esteem: they enjoyed a large share of Divine favour; and, patiently continuing in well-doing, were graciously accounted worthy of glory, and honour, and immortality. Now it is

distinctly stated that they who "obtained this good report," obtained it "by faith,"—the faith which the Apostle had just defined as being "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Many were the noble deeds by which they became illustrious; many the heroic actions they performed; deep the suffering through which they passed: but the ground whereon the Divine approval was founded is stated to be, not their doings or their sufferings, but *their faith.* And why is this? Because it was "faith" that influenced their lives, and nerved them to the performance of great deeds, —"faith" that animated them to effort,—"faith" that encouraged them to self-denial. Brethren, "faith" lies at the root of all that is lovely and of good report: it is the parent of godly sorrow for sin, of holy obedience, of constraining love; it is the spring of hope, and trust, and perseverance; it is the principle which enables a man to surrender what he loves, to give up what he desires, to do what he dislikes, to endure what he dreads. "Faith" makes its possessor struggle for the mastery in all things, crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, consecrate his energies to God, and press on to the eternal life

through a thousand difficulties and a thousand dangers. "Faith" it is which constrains a man to "follow after the holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" to cultivate whatsoever things are pure, and honest, and just; to humble pride, and submit the understanding; to overcome the world, resist the devil, vanquish death, and lay hold on life everlasting. I wonder not that so much of honour is attached to faith. What can yield such a revenue of glory to God? Where can there be found a principle producing such fruits of obedience, such works of righteousness, such submissions, such resignation, such unwearied effort, such untiring zeal? Nowhere! Not in the record of great exploits, and splendid deeds performed by this world's heroes, shall we find the moral greatness, the steadfast fortitude, the victory over self, which are evidenced in the life of the despised, the reproached, but nevertheless illustrious throng of God's heroes, who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

These are men who conquered themselves; and "he that ruleth his own spirit, is better than he that taketh a city." They fought a good fight; they warred a good warfare; they endured hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; they vindicated the authority of God, and left the world better than they found it. Can we wonder, then, that when the Apostle would justify his definition of "faith," and the efficacy he had assigned unto it, he should adduce as witnesses these worthies of the olden time, who, through believing in God, achieved many noble deeds, and endured many "a great fight of afflictions; or that he should remind us that by it,"—that is, "by faith,"—"*the elders obtained a good report*"?

In the third verse of this chapter, the Apostle confirms and exemplifies his proposition by an instance closely connected with the second clause of his general definition of "faith:" "The evidence of things not seen." "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear." When it is said, that "by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God," the Apostle seems to intimate that we are

not indebted for this knowledge to sight, or to science, or to philosophy. Reason indeed, arguing from design, cannot but refer the creation to a first great cause. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork;" but for all certainty as to this world's origin, and the mode whereby it was called into existence, we are indebted to the Word of God. No human eye looked on as God came forth from the solitudes of eternity and laid the foundations of the earth; as "He shut up the sea with doors;" as "He made the clouds the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band;" when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." For this knowledge we are indebted to "the living oracles," which show us, not "a long system of evolution,"—not "a fortuitous concourse of atoms,"—but a personal God at work in creation, brooding over the face of the waters, calling light out of darkness, garnishing the heavens, dividing the day from the night, speaking the word and it was done, commanding and it stood fast. Now, the belief of the fact of creation on God's authority is "faith;" and the faith which receives the revelation that the

mighty God called into being, by His Word, "this gleaming wilderness of suns and worlds," is, indeed, "the evidence of things not seen."

Brethren, how is it with us? Have we faith in the Divine promises? Are we resting on God? Do we take God at His word? Do we accept that word as our "evidence of things not seen"? Have we faith in the love and mercy of God in the gift of His Son, and in our redemption through Christ; in the forgiveness of our sins; in the peace which flows from the blood of the cross? "Faith" is the reception of all the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel. Receiving them we live: the just shall live through his faith. Unbelief is their rejection; and rejecting the Truth of God we make Him a liar, and must everlastingly die.

And the faith that saves,—what is it? That living trust in a living person which brings forth fruit in the life. "Faith worketh by love," and "love is the fulfilling of the law." And so faith, triumphing over all difficulties,—making the heart strong to bear and to endure,—meets with God's approval, and leads to a blessed recompense at last. "By it the elders obtained a good report:" their record is on high; their honourable

deeds are inscribed on the pages of the Church's history: "Being dead, they yet speak." The story of their love, labour, patience, sufferings, shall last as long as time endures. In the strength of their faith they had won glorious victories; in the strength of their faith they had endured bitter sufferings. Through faith we also "obtain a good report;" through faith we walk in the light of God's reconciled countenance: and we have the testimony of a good conscience. By faith we anticipate the time when he that is "faithful unto death shall receive a crown of life." Then will the words of a welcoming Saviour put the final stamp upon His own statement: "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

Let us pray for faith. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" "Lord, increase our faith!" God of His infinite mercy grant that our faith,—the faith by which we live from day to day, and from hour to hour,—by which we trust, and confide, and submit, and overcome,—may realize the Apostle's description, as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!"

II.

Abel.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."—HEBREWS xi. 4.

SUCH is the testimony of the Apostle Paul. Having given a definition of "faith," and selected, as his first illustration of its power, our belief in the fact of the creation, he proceeds to bring before the Hebrews some striking examples of saints who lived upon this earth in times gone by, and who wrought, and suffered, and conquered through this same mighty principle of "faith," which "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

His first witness is the second son of Adam; that worthy of olden time who is called by our Saviour, "The righteous Abel." The history to which St. Paul alludes is found in the fourth

chapter of the Book of Genesis, and at the third verse. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect. And Cain was wroth, and his countenance fell."

This narrative brings under our notice two brothers, the earliest born of the human kind, who come to worship the same God, and to "honour the Lord with their substance and with the firstfruits of all their increase." Seeing them thus standing together at the gates of Eden, where stood the cherubim with the flaming sword, and before the first altar erected in a fallen world, and at the stated season when they were accustomed to present themselves before the Lord, we, who only "look at the outward appearance," might imagine that each worshipper will find equal favour in the eyes of God; but He who seeth not as man seeth,—the Searcher of hearts,—judges differently. He accepts the one, and rejects the other. Why does the Lord put such a distinction between the offerings of

the two brothers? In both oblations there is acknowledgment of the Supreme Being: the intrinsic value of both gifts is in God's sight the same; and Cain is equally desirous with Abel to have his offering accepted,—for it is solely because it is not received, that he is so grievously provoked. Cain, being a tiller of the ground, brings, as we might have expected, "of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord;" Abel, being a keeper of sheep, brings "of the firstlings of his flock." Wherein, then, lies the great difference? The Apostle answers the question: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Abel worshipped in faith; and the reality of this grace he exhibited by presenting an offering to God which savoured more of sacrifice than the offering of fruits and flowers presented by Cain. Abel's faith was shown in the manner of his approach to God,—"through the shedding of blood;" and "God testified of his gifts." In what way? Most probably by fire: the fire of God falling and consuming the sacrifice. It was thus that God usually testified His acceptance of worship.

On the day of Aaron's consecration, when he and Moses had offered the sacrifice appointed for that solemn occasion, "there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat;" when Solomon, at the consecration of the temple, "made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifice;" when Elijah and the prophets of Baal met on Carmel to decide the question whether Jehovah or Baal were the true God, the answer was to be given by fire; and when Elijah had presented his sacrifice, "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." God answereth by fire. So when the two brothers presented, the one his offering, the other his sacrifice, there was no witness that the fruits and the flowers brought by Cain were accepted. God passed them by without recognition: neither was voice heard, nor flame from heaven fell. But on Abel's lamb the fire came down, and the smoke of the sacrifice went up to God the odour of a sweet smell, acceptable in His sight. Abel went on his way rejoicing, at peace with God

through faith in the coming Redeemer. "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell;" and, filled with the fierce and sullen spirit of hatred against his brother, "he rose up against him, as they talked in the field, and slew him." And then "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord," —God's brand stamped in burning characters on his brow,—"a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth." And wherefore? Because he rejected "the righteousness which is by faith; because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." We infer, from the acceptance of Abel's offering, that the duty and method of sacrificial worship must have been prescribed by God Himself; since, without some peculiar mode of sacrifice enjoined, man could not have exemplified his faith and obedience by an appropriate oblation.

There cannot indeed be a doubt that all sacrifices were instituted by Divine command, as standing memorials that sin needed expiation, and ever-recurring types of that great atoning sacrifice which God had provided in the eternal counsels of His own will. Had sacrifices not been *appointed*, they would have been acts of "*will-worship*," and would not have found favour

with God. On the great Atoning Sacrifice the faith of Abel rested. Connecting the death of his bleeding lamb with the death of that "Lamb" which was to "take away the sin of the world," his faith became the substance of things hoped for, even of that promise made in the garden of Eden of one who should "bruise the serpent's head;" it became also "the evidence of things not seen," inasmuch as he looked for pardon and salvation to that unseen Saviour who was hereafter to be revealed. Abel "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Through the offering of a lamb, he showed that he recognised his own sinful state, which needed expiation, and approved the justice of God, which required satisfaction; he acknowledged at the same time his thankful reception of the free mercies of redemption. Cain, on the other hand, rebelled against the appointment of God. Withholding the sacrifice which God enjoined, he presented an offering of "will-worship," in which there was no reference either to sin or to a Saviour. His carnal mind would not be subject to the law of God: his unsubdued heart would not confess its need of forgiveness; he despised the riches of redeeming

love, and went about to establish a righteousness of his own. Therefore, "unto Cain and to his offering the Lord had not respect," while "He had respect unto Abel and his offering," the fire falling down from heaven to consume the sacrifice which the latter laid upon the altar.

Observe, therefore, the vital importance of having a true faith. "Without faith," the Apostle tells us, "it is impossible to please God." Mark how this truth is exemplified in the case of these two worshippers. Cain has no faith, and his offering is rejected; Abel has a true faith, and his sacrifice is accepted. I pray you give heed to this point. Abel was first accepted as righteous before God, and *then* his offering was received. It was not that his sacrifice made him acceptable to the Lord; he was justified through faith before he offered it. His sacrifice was nothing more than the outward expression of the faith which he had before it was presented; and God, by His acceptance of this work of obedience, bore witness that He accounted him righteous, or, that he was justified in His sight. Let this truth have its proper place in your mind.

But let us pause here; for I wish you now to

turn your thoughts from these two brothers, and to fasten them upon yourselves. Let me ask you whether in your approaches unto the throne of grace you draw nigh unto "the Father of the spirits of all flesh" with a mind submissive to the righteousness of God? Do you come before the Holy One as a person entitled by your own gifts, or your own merits, to present yourself at His footstool? Do you appear, like Cain, before the Judge of all the earth without the atoning blood? If so, you cannot be accepted; you cannot hope for the Divine favour. "Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." There is a grand exclusiveness, a grand intolerance about the way of salvation. "There is none other name under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ." He that left the bosom of the Father for man's redemption; He that came to "make peace by the blood of His cross," and to reconcile the world unto God,—has said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." There is invitation, and there is welcome; but there is obstruction, and limitation too. All who would

enter into the sheep-fold must enter by the door. No matter who you are, or what you are,—noble, or brave, or pure,—wise, or great, or strong,—philosopher, or moralist, or poet,—you can only come to the Father through the Son; you must stoop to enter heaven by the same door that admitted the sinning Magdalene and the penitent thief. Have we come to God through the way of His own appointing, and, becoming "heirs of the righteousness which is by faith," have we entered upon "the liberty wherewith Christ maketh His people free"? If we have, then not only are our sins forgiven, but we are able to worship God in the Spirit, and our service—to ourselves the most perfect freedom—is to Him holy and acceptable," and as "the odour of a sweet smell."

I remark again, as a truth which naturally springs from this story, that "the righteousness which is by faith" will make us willing not only to witness for Christ, but to suffer for Christ,—not only to do for Christ, but to die for Christ. Abel sealed his faith with his blood. As the brothers walked together, and "Cain talked with Abel his brother," he rose up against him, and slew him. And wherefore? What moved Cain

to this act? Not want of natural affection; not wanton cruelty; not the heat of sudden passion. What then? St. John explains Cain's motive in the third chapter of his first Epistle, and at the twelfth verse: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It was the rebuke borne by Abel's righteous works to the evil works of Cain,—to his unbelief, and self-righteousness, and pride, that roused the hatred of Cain, and made him raise his murderous hand against his brother. And Abel was willing to suffer for righteousness' sake. May we be as willing. For "the offence of the cross has not ceased." "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you;" if it cannot bear your bold and uncompromising testimony against sin. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." What advantage then, you may ask, in adopting a religion which promises to its disciples such trials, and such enmity? Better to go through life with a light and merry heart, and secure the friendship of the world. Well, granted that you might escape some troubles, and some self-denial, and the enmity

of the world, by refusing to close with the offers of the Gospel,—what then? If there were no other world than the present, no death, no judgment, no eternity,—if there were neither heaven nor hell, then we might utter the reckless cry of the worldling: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But if there be a God whose eyes are upon the righteous, and whose ear is open to their prayer,—if there be another world,—if beyond the present narrow existence there stretch infinite ages; and if these ages must be spent by *you* in joy unspeakable, or in woe unutterable,—what then, I ask you,—what then?

Brethren, be wise, and follow the example of that worthy of old, who "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Especially since the people of God, with all their troubles and sorrows, are happier than the men of the world, in the midst of their gaiety and ease;—happier than they are with all "their corn and wine," seeing they are still holden in "the gall of sin and in the bondage of iniquity." And the life of faith is a noble life; the fight of faith is a "good fight." There is a beauty in holiness,

a grandeur in self-restraint, and a pleasure in all the moral virtues, which is its own reward. And if we look to the future,—who has the advantage then? Cain did his worst against Abel; he lifted up his arm against him and slew him. But he could do no more: man can only kill the body; the soul is beyond his reach. Seeing Abel stretched a ghastly corpse upon the ground, we might be inclined to mourn over him, and weep that one so holy and so righteous was removed from earth so early; but as we followed his spirit in its passage into the other world as the first fruits of redeeming love, there would be room in our hearts for no other feeling but that of longing that we might share the same glory, and enter into the same joy. He led the van in that "noble army of martyrs," whose crown shall be the brightest, and whose station shall be the highest in the radiant courts above. And as "absent from the body," he was "present with the Lord," and saw "face to face" his Redeemer and his God, do you think he regretted that he "witnessed a good confession," or that he felt anything but the deepest, the truest joy, that he had submitted himself to "the righteousness which is by faith"? There he is now, no

longer a solitary spirit before the throne, but in the company of that "great multitude which no man can number," who wear white robes, and have palms in their hands, and who "rest not day nor night, saying, Salvation unto our God, and to the Lamb."

Brethren, would you join that glorious company? Then, remember there is but one way by which you can do so. You must have Abel's faith: this is your only hope. A voice reaches us from the far ages of the past, which gives a thrilling testimony to this truth: "By it," says the Apostle,—that is, by the sacrifice through which his faith was displayed,—"Abel, being dead, yet speaketh." Though dead, Abel is not silent: he speaks still, he will speak to the end of time. Listen to the voice which comes up from the first martyr's grave: it deserves your earnest attention. It proclaims that there is only one mode through which the guilty can have access to God, and that all who seek to approach in any other manner must and will be rejected; it proclaims that the infidelity which denies an Atoning Sacrifice, is as hateful in the eyes of the Almighty as the infidelity which denies boldly existence of a God: that Deism is as in-

sulting to the Lord as Atheism. Cain was not a scoffer, or a sceptic, or indifferent to the worship of his Maker. He was a Deist: a self-righteous man, who, rejecting "the right eousness which is by faith," sought to establish his own. He would have nothing to do with justifying righteousness through the atoning blood of the promised Saviour—that better sacrifice, of which Abel's lamb was a type,—therefore he was rejected. He was religious after a certain fashion: but what was his religion worth? When his pride was offended, he became maddened with rage, and jealousy, and the rebuke borne to his own unbelief by his brother's faith; and he stained his hands in that brother's blood. Let the self-righteous tremble as they read the history; for Abel, being dead, speaketh still. He proclaims that all who reject God's truth and despise the atoning blood, all who refuse to be guided by the "true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," are walking in "sparks of their own kindling," which shall lead them astray, and land them in the blackness of darkness for ever.

And Abel's voice has yet another warning message. It speaks to you, and to me, and to

the world, saying, that there is one sin which lies at the root of all other sins, and is the fruitful source of every evil work: this is unbelief. Yea, unbelief brings blood-guiltiness on the soul. A brother's blood,—an elder brother's blood,—is upon those guilty of this sin. Unbelief is a damning sin. Through this, men "crucify Christ afresh, and put Him to an open shame." And this sin lies at the door of many,—of all who are ashamed of Christ, who refuse to take up His cross. The sin may be on your soul; for you have preferred your pleasure to His service. When sin and Christ have stood before you, claiming your allegiance, have you not chosen sin, and cried out, impatiently, "Away with Him: away with Him! Crucify Him: crucify Him!" "Not this man but Barabbas!" And if so, are you not guilty of the body and blood of the Son of God; for you have pierced Him by your sins? And His blood has also a voice: it crieth loudly in our ears. And what saith it? Oh, my brother, blessed be God, it "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel!" It crieth not for vengeance, but for mercy; it tells us that a Fountain has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, and that, repenting and be-

lieving, all our guilt may be purged away in its cleansing streams; it assures us that,—however conscience may accuse us or our own heart condemn us, however long we have wandered in the ways of ungodliness, however deeply we have offended,—if we but come to God through Christ, we need not fear; for His blood "cleanseth from all sin:" it makes "the scarlet white as snow, and the crimson pure as wool."

May we all solemnly weigh these truths, and lay them to heart. Let us pray for an increase of faith: let us seek to live the life of faith, that so in the awful day when "all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him," as "He cometh with clouds,"—when "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him,"—we, with Abel and the whole company of the redeemed, may enter with the Saviour into God's presence,—where "there is fulness of joy;" and be received to His right hand,—where "there are pleasures for evermore."

III.

Enoch.

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."—HEBREWS xi. 5, 6.

HERE we have the Apostle's second personal example of that mighty spiritual principle "faith," which is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

We have already seen its power in the life of accepted Abel. Let us now examine its influence and issue in the history of translated Enoch.

Enoch was of the godly family of Seth, and styled "the seventh from Adam," to distinguish him from Enoch the son of Cain. Living in an age when men were throwing off the knowledge of the Lord, Enoch stood forth as a bold and

faithful champion of the truth, to proclaim that "the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men," and to warn sinners of a judgment to come. The burden of his prophetic strains is recorded in the Epistle of St. Jude: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

At so early a period of the world's history did this holy man of God announce the coming of the Lord to judgment. His life was one consistent testimony to God. For 300 years he walked with God as husband and father,—an example to his family, an example to the world; and no doubt, year after year, during his long sojourn on earth, he ceased not to plead with an ungodly generation, urging men to "flee from the wrath to come,"—pleading with them till the very moment when he was caught up into the presence of the God whom he loved faithfully and served. For this is the testimony given

n[illegible] in the 5th chapter of Genesis: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Compare this recorded fact with the words that have been already read from the Epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; . . . for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Here now the Apostle ascribes the holiness which adorned the life and character of this worthy and the remarkable favour in which he was held of God, attested by his translation, to the grace and principle of "faith." He accepts the recorded fact of the signal privilege shown to the patriarch in his exemption from death, and in his entrance in the body into the glories of heaven as a proof that Enoch "pleased God:" and to please God, he tells us we must have [illegible] without faith it is impossible to please [illegible] that cometh unto God must believe [illegible] that he is a rewarder of them [illegible]

[illegible] reasoning with the [illegible] righteousness temperance. [illegible] fact received some [illegible] Divine approbation.

and was given a clear indication that he was greatly beloved of God. You see, then, how this early saint was a witness for God, and for God's truth, to the scoffing generation in which he lived. He witnessed that God, so far from being an unconcerned observer of what passes on the earth, "is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him;" and that, however long delayed be the retribution, judgment shall yet fall upon the presumptuous and proud doer. He witnessed to the realities of a future state, in which men in the body shall be recompensed according to their deeds, whether they have been good or bad.

Let me now endeavour to show you what is included in the expression, "walking with God."

There are two essential points suggested by this phrase. The first, in what way alone we as sinners, can begin to "walk with God;" the second, the manner in which the communion entered into is to be carried on. You will remember the question of the Prophet Amos: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Now we learn from this question that there can be no fellowship between man and God, until man and God be "agreed," or reconciled.

This concerns your everlasting happiness,—it concerns mine. When we think that all men are by nature in a state of enmity to God, it becomes evident that if we continue in that awful condition, and die with the enmity of the carnal mind in its unsubdued rancour, we must perish, and that without remedy; for "righteousness can have no fellowship with unrighteousness, and light can have no communion with darkness." Unless a difference be made in our moral position, the creature can hold no loving intercourse with the Creator: man cannot "walk with God." But Infinite Love and wisdom have devised a glorious method of redemption, through which the necessary change in our moral condition may be effected; and God, by giving the Son of His love to "take upon Him our nature," and to bear in that nature the curse of the law, has opened up a righteous way of access, through which man can approach Him "with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith." A Daysman has arisen to lay His hand upon both, and in Him there is restoration for all who believe in His name, to the very heart of our Father who is in heaven. Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man,—"the way, the truth, and the life;" the

anointed Saviour, who in the body of His flesh through death has made it possible that God can be "just and yet the justifier" of the ungodly. Though "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," yet in the infinitude of a love which passeth knowledge, He condescended to become one with man, that man might become one with God. From the first moment of transgression He was the Saviour: the way to the Father has been ever through the Son. The same Christ who was boldly preached by the Apostles and Evangelists after His crucifixion, was from the beginning held forth to the faith of the early world through the institution of bleeding sacrifices, and mystic emblems, and shadowy types. Thousands in every age of the earth's history, apprehending the promises of God, and seeing the day of Christ afar off, were "saved by grace, through faith;" became possessed of a "peace passing all understanding," and partakers of a "hope that maketh not ashamed."

And, brethren, if we would "walk with God," we must begin by being reconciled to God through accepting Christ as a Saviour. Not a step can be taken without this. In Christ, and

in Christ alone, can there be a mutual reconciliation between the offending sinner and the offended Judge; and where there is not this closing with Christ (let me speak plainly), whatever be the form of godliness a man has, whatever semblance of religion he may have, however conscience or reason may urge him on to certain acts of worship: he has not taken the first step to heaven: he is not like Enoch, "walking with God."

Let us now consider, in the second place, the manner in which the communion entered into is carried on. And here I would impress upon you the truth, that as the walk with God is begun by faith, so is the walk with God maintained by faith. Faith first brought Enoch nigh, and faith kept Enoch nigh.

And what is the nature of this close, confidential, and happy intercourse with God?

Walking implies progress. When we walk we advance step by step along the way that lies before us, whether it be smooth or arduous, steep or rugged. Walking also implies exertion. We use our limbs, exercise our minds, and have a determined object before us, which we intelligently follow. Admitting then that walking

implies continuous progressive exertion, let us now consider the manner in which we are to walk with God.

And first, let us walk *trustingly.* As long as we have any suspicion as regards God's feelings towards us, whilst we think the controversy between Him and us is unsettled, we cannot have that full Christian liberty which is the secret of true peace, the mainspring of an active, holy obedience. Having become His children by faith in Christ Jesus, let us never doubt His love. Though we are "often in heaviness through manifold temptations," though, alas, we "cannot do the things that we would," though "the evil that we would not" that we too often do, though we have to mourn over the root of bitterness that is in our hearts,—yet, in spite of all, let us confide in God, and believe that when we come to His throne He will receive us graciously, and heal all our backslidings. And, brethren, it is this simple trust in God's readiness to forgive us freely, this knowledge that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," that will cause us to hate the sin by which we have grieved the Holy Spirit, and which will bind us more firmly than ever to the service of

the Lord. There is no truth that can so humble under a sense of guilt, or so turn the smitten heart into a fountain of tears, as that of the love of God triumphing over all our ingratitude and sin. Have you been drawn aside from your Heavenly Father? Have you been entangled again in the pollutions of the world? Have you put your hand to the plough and "looked back"? What is the remedy? Come back again at once, and without hesitation, to God. Do not add sin to sin by distrusting the riches of His pardoning grace. Cast yourself on His love; wash again in His cleansing blood; believe in His goodness, and pray for strength to "walk" once more before Him, as a dear child, in the holy fellowship of love.

Again: *walk humbly with your God.* Let your confidence be lowly as well as filial. Angels in heaven veil their faces before the splendour of His awful majesty; saints in glory will cast their crowns at His feet, and fall down at His footstool. Remember the infinite distance between the Almighty Jehovah and a creature who, "at His best estate, is lighter than vanity itself." Think what *you* are, and what *He* is: and though you be one of His adopted children, lie prostrate

in the dust before Him, and cherish a spirit of reverent and devout humility. Never grow familiar in your confidence; never wax careless in the midst of your filial approaches to His presence. Pride goeth before a fall; but the broken spirit and the contrite heart is the very sacrifice in which the Lord taketh pleasure. "If I be a Father," He asks, "where is my honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?" Therefore "walk humbly with Thy God."

Again: walk *obediently*. Obedience is the mark of a true disciple. "If ye love Me, keep my commandments:" "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Let your obedience be unreserved, honest, faithful: let it be extended to every duty, and embrace every claim that God makes upon your service. Honour the Lord by subjection to His will; run the way of all His commandments; be not weary in well-doing. It is a high vocation to which you are called. But I speak now unto those who, being quickened with Christ, are therefore in possession of that principle of divine life which is the germ of true obedience, and the very root of all true holiness: for love,—the constraining love of Christ,—is

the motive power of the Christian life; and "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Again: walk *patiently* with God. This is also needful: for however confiding your walk may be,—however humble it may be, still you must be prepared for endurance. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"—and all for the child's good, that through these chastisements we may be partakers of His holiness." Let us then be patient; and when we feel the hand of the Lord heavy upon us, let us not struggle or rebel; but, bowing the head, let us meekly kiss the rod, even though the heart be smarting beneath the blow. It is most blessed to be able at the moment that God has thwarted our will, at the moment He has wounded some of our tenderest feelings, at the moment He has disappointed us,—then to find grace triumphant, and to be able to say—

"Oh, Lord my God, do Thou Thy holy will!
I will lie still:
I will not stir, lest I forsake Thine arm,
And break the charm
Which lulls me, clinging to my Father's breast
In perfect rest."

This is happiness and peace. And do we not know that "He doeth all things well"?—that "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy"? The way may seem long and wearisome, the furnace may be seven times heated, the wilderness may look wild, and desolate, and barren,—but remember there is an end to the longest and to the saddest night. Tears will not always flow; sorrow will not always trouble. It is not easy, I grant, to be at all times "patient in tribulation:" but God's strength is sufficient for us, and grace can overcome nature. Therefore, "be strong, and of a good courage." Do not be disheartened, though the tempest rage, and the sea of this stormy life be boisterous: hold thee still upon God, and "let patience have her perfect work;" "for in due season you shall reap if you faint not."

To mention but one other point, let your walk be *prayerful.* See that your communion with God be constant, fervent, unrestrained. You know that when you walk with a friend on earth you have a conscious sense of his presence; and as you proceed onwards together, you delight in the interchange of thought and feelings. Strive always to entertain the consciousness that God

is an ever-present Friend; for, indeed, He is ever near,—"about our bed," ready at all times to assist us with His counsel, and to cheer us with His aid; nor is there anything that we need wish to hide from Him. There is much that passeth within the mind which we would not tell to the dearest of our earthly friends; but it is not so with God: there is not a thought of our hearts which we may not lay bare to Him; not a sin which we may not confess to Him; not a sorrow which we may not entrust to Him,—assured that His ear is ever listening, His compassion ever sympathizing, His love ever long-suffering; yea, that He is "a very present help in time of trouble." What a privilege thus to walk with God!

And, brethren, let me say here that such a walk as I have described is possible to every Christian man. We are again and again urged to this walk of faith, and prayer, and patience. We are commanded to "walk in the light, as God is in the light;" to "walk in love, as Christ also loved us;" to "walk honestly, as in the day;" to walk so as to please God; to "walk even as Christ walked;" to "walk in the Spirit, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And how

is this to be accomplished? By casting yourselves on the strength of that God, who, working in you to will and to do of His good pleasure," gives you power to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and "cleansing yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, to perfect holiness in the fear of God." Thus do we become victorious over sin; and, coming out of the conflict "more than conquerors," we are able, like Enoch, to walk the world with God.

And now let us briefly look at Enoch's translation; "He was not: for God took him." "He was not found;" "he was translated that he should not see death." He passed into the unseen world without tasting the bitterness of the last dreadful cup. He realized St. Paul's wish, "not to be unclothed but clothed upon." One hour he was "walking with God" on earth, the next he was "walking with God" in heaven. No very violent transition after all: it was the natural conclusion of the life of faith: it was the bud suddenly blooming into the flower; the dawn passing at once into the perfect day. He was taken in the body, as Elijah was, though apparently without the chariot and horses of fire, into that unseen world where is the throne

of God, and where the angels sing His praise. He was "taken from the evil to come,"—taken from a world lying in the wicked one," to which he had foretold a coming Lord and a coming judgment,—taken from the scoffs of men to the hallelujahs of heaven,—from scenes of strife and sorrow, to everlasting blessedness, to "joy unspeakable and full of glory,"—taken from the struggle and the cross of the confessor walking by faith, to the victory and the crown of the saint walking by sight,—from the companionship of evil men to the fellowship of angels and of God. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the corruptible had put on incorruption, the mortal immortality; death was swallowed up in victory, mortality swallowed up of life. So all was well with him; and for the world his translation was a clear testimony to the wicked and sceptical men of his age, of the solemn truths of a future state and a final judgment. For there were Materialists in those days, as there are Materialists now: men who were saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;" and for them Enoch's trans-

lation had a voice: "Verily, there is a God who judgeth in the earth."

But Enoch's translation had not only a voice for the sceptical, but it contained comfort for those who, like Enoch, were walking with God, and who were opposing a bold front to the evil; for it would teach them that "the Lord is mindful of His own," and that He will "avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him." And so Enoch "was not found, for God had translated him." Men may have sought for him, as in after days men sought for Elijah, his worth only known through his loss; but the search of friend and foe was alike in vain: he was gone. He "was not: for God took him."

If Abel, "being dead, yet speaketh," so Enoch, being translated, speaketh also. We see in him a foreshadowing of those who shall be found "walking with God," when the Lord comes again; and who, without seeing death, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air." "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not the angels of God." "The times and the seasons the Father has reserved in His own power." The practical question is,—If our Lord were to

come in our day, are we now so walking with Him by faith, that when He appears we shall be able to look up and "lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption draweth nigh"?

And if it be His will that we should die, are we so making it Christ to live that death will be gain? and that in answer to the message, "Put thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," we shall be able to say, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace"? Some deaths are more like translations than deaths, so full are they of peace, and rest, and joy; Christ is so near, and heaven is so close, while communion with the invisible world appears already to have begun. The ear seems to catch the songs of angels, and the eye to have visions of the shining ones, and the harp, and the crown; and the dying chamber looks more like a porch to heaven than a gate to the grave. There was one who maintained for years a close "walk with God," who near the last day of his beautiful life appeared to be in such holy and awful fellowship with the unseen Saviour, that friends were hushed into reverent silence. At length, after a time of perfect stillness, he whispered,—"Faithful, faithful." A bright light stole over

his face as he seemed to thread the labyrinth, and solve the mystery of love. "Higher," said he, "higher!" and they raised his pillow, and lifted his dying head; but he waved his hand, and rallied all his life's last energy, to cry, "Higher!"—and then his spirit soared into the region of eternal purity and joy. "He was not: for God took him." It was with him as with Christian and Hopeful in the great allegory. "These two men were, as it were, in heaven before they came to it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here they had also the city in view, and thought they heard all the bells therein to ring to welcome them thereto."

May it be so with us! May we "die the death of the righteous, and our last end be like his!" And when the final sickness is past, and the pain and the humiliation is over, may we, having walked with the Lord here, walk with Him hereafter, in those "white garments" which saints and angels wear; walk with Him for ever through the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, and by the green pastures and still waters of the Paradise of God!

Brethren, seeing we look for such things,—for

an eternity of glory where God shall be all in all,—"what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" How long shall our hearts be grovelling in the world; how long shall our affections be bound down to earth; how long shall our practice give the lie to our profession; and we, who call ourselves by Christ's name, manifest so little of Christ's spirit? Shall it be thus for ever? Nay! rather let us aim at "a closer walk with God;" a more conscious "fellowship with the Father and with the Son:" whether we live, may we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, may we die unto the Lord; and then, when we shall be called up higher, this beautiful and simple record will survive each one of us,—a better epitaph could not be devised,—"He was not: for God took him."

IV.

Noah.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."—HEBREWS xi. 7.

WE have here the Apostle's third illustration of the power and efficacy of that saving "faith," which is "the evidence of things not seen as yet."

We have already seen how this mighty principle was manifested in the sacrifice which Abel offered, and in the translation with which Enoch was honoured. Abel standing at the altar whereon is laid the lamb,—the expression of his faith in a propitiation yet to be rendered for sin,—and seeing his offering accepted; Enoch "walking with God," announcing the coming of the Lord in judgment, and suddenly withdrawn in the body from earth to heaven,—are evident

and undeniable proofs that God is "a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him."

Noah was the son of the younger Lamech, and was descended from the line of Seth, the goodly seed, through Enoch. If you turn to the fifth chapter of the Book of Genesis and begin at the twenty-eighth verse, you will read the following words: "And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

The name given by Lamech to his son was truly prophetic: for whether you interpret that name to mean "rest," or "comfort," the prediction was verified. In his days the earth had "rest" from that burthen of wickedness beneath which it groaned and laboured. And through him the hearts of the faithful were "comforted," because in him the promise of that woman's seed was secured, through whom the curse was entirely to be destroyed, and in whom all the families of mankind were to be blessed. It may have been that the Lord vouchsafed to Lamech some special revelation of the prominent part

which his son was to play in the world's history; and that, therefore, in a time when his patience was sorely tried by the abounding wickedness of a world wholly and entirely corrupt, and his lot embittered by the culture of a barren and sterile soil, he was able to hail the birth of a son with the bright augury of hope; and calling his name "Noah," could say, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."

If you read the sixth chapter of Genesis, in which a very fearful description is given of the impiety, and profligacy, and infidelity of the antediluvian world, you will find that the patriarch stands out in fine and noble relief from the surrounding darkness of the fearful picture. There were godless marriages: "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." "The earth," it is said, "was corrupt before God, and filled with violence." There was lust, and craft, and cruelty, and wrong. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil con-

tinually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

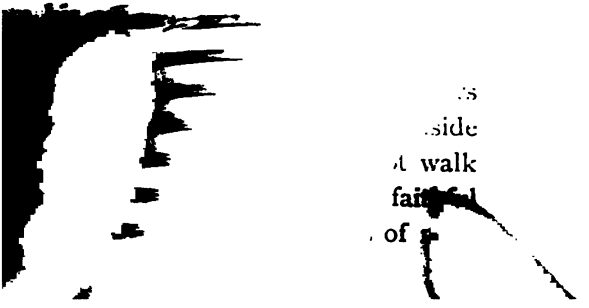
Mark how, in bright contrast with the wickedness of men in general, comes out the portraiture of Noah: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Here was the secret and source of the difference that existed between Noah and the families of the godless and impenitent. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." And because the Lord regarded him with favour, He implanted in his heart that faith through which he was enabled to fix his affections on things above, and to give to the unseen world the preference over the seen. The eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he was able to realize those invisible things which lie far beyond the range of all whose vision has not been purged of its natural darkness by the spirit of the living God. And under the energizing power of this faith,—for his was that true faith which actuates the soul, and incites to exertion, —Noah became "a just man and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with God." For such is the conclusion of that noble portrait which the sacred historian draws of this illus-

trious worthy. Though not "perfect" in that sense of the word which excludes sinfulness,—for this is an impossible attainment on this side the grave,—"there is no man that liveth and sinneth not,"—yet was he "perfect," as allowing in himself no wilful sin, and as endeavouring to walk in all the way of the commandments blameless. The flesh still lusted against the spirit: "the law of sin was still in his members," but it was his desire, and effort, and object, to render unto God a holy and complete obedience, —to be "in His fear all the day long."

So Noah walks with God, and the world follows its own way. The Lord's patience is at length exhausted: the doom of the ungodly is sealed. "The Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh," —so corrupt that means of grace are lavished upon him in vain; so hardened that he will not turn from his evil ways that he may be saved. "Yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." He shall not be cut off suddenly, and without remedy: a little season shall be allowed him before my wrath burn to the uttermost. What a comment on the character of God! How such forbearance lays open the compassion

of Him who "is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Well does the prophet Isaiah declare that when the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth, destruction is "His strange work, His act, His strange act." He would spare the children of men if He righteously could; He would permit the sword of vengeance to lie sheathed in the scabbard, if such a course of action were consistent with His most holy name. It is with sorrow that He bares His arm in the sight of the nations: it is with regret that He thinks of having created a world which He must now destroy. "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." More in accordance would it have been with the yearnings of His tender mercy, had He never summoned the world into being, than that He should now destroy the work of His own hands. When I read such a passage as this, full as it is to overflowing of Divine love and pity, I have before me another scene of unexampled compassion;—I see my

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and there was hardly one godly man left,—nevertheless "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" and being accepted through faith, he was the special object of the Divine care. "And God said unto Noah, Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."

And now Noah's faith comes out clearly and strongly defined. God's warning moved him to a holy fear of God's judgments; God's command was met by a prompt obedience in building the ark as God had enjoined. The reality of his faith was thus proved; and thus it became manifest that this Divine grace was to him "the evidence of things not seen as yet." God had declared His intention of "bringing a flood of waters upon the earth;" and though Noah could not see the destruction which was predicted, yet he believed the appalling announcement, and expected the deluge just as certainly as if he

beheld the rushing of the waters, and heard the roaring of the storm. The skies above were calm and cloudless; the world around was robed in the hues of beauty; there was nothing in the azure heavens, nothing in the fair green earth, to tell of ruin and desolation: but before his mind's eye there swept the terrors of the destroying deluge; and "being moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house." "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," he at once set about the great work which he had been commanded to perform, and by his obedience and calls to repentance, he condemned the world of unbelief. His was a trying and perilous position, whilst he laboured at the ark and fulfilled his mission as a "preacher of righteousness." As he toiled on day after day at his stupendous task, patiently and unflinchingly, for the space of one hundred and twenty years, he was no doubt a subject for the mirth and scorn of the scoffing and the profane. How they railed at his enthusiasm! How they laughed at his folly! What an amount of wit was lavished on his credulity! And how many hated him for the boldness with which he denounced their sins! What bitter railings were uttered against

the officiousness which moved him to disturb their ease and interfere with their enjoyments! But hold on, thou man of God, in thy noble course, unshaken by the terror of the ungodly. Let the unbelieving point to lofty mountain and widespread plain, to waving forest and fertile field, as they lie glowing in the noontide; let them point to the blue firmament overhead, and ask scoffingly, whence are to break forth the waters which shall deluge the face of God's earth and overwhelm it with the predicted inundation? "Faint not, neither grow weary" in thy work of faith in building the ark, and in thy "labour of love" in preaching the righteousness of God; but wait and see the end of the ungodly!

And now, through years of discouragement, Noah has steadily persevered in his task. Beam has been added to beam, and plank to plank, till the ark is finished. The last nail has been driven; the hammer no more resounds. The preacher's voice is no more lifted up in warning, or expostulation, or entreaty: his ministry is ended, the world's day of grace is past. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.... For

yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him."

Here, again, is the faith of Noah made apparent. Seven days before the rushing torrent is let loose upon the world, Noah, with the members of his household and the living creatures which were to replenish the earth, enters the ark, and "the Lord shut him in." What shouts of merriment are raised as the patriarch and his family embark in the unwieldy vessel! What fierce contempt and derision flash from every eye, as the old man, nothing daunted by their scorn, passes calmly on his way, and lays hold of the refuge that is set before him! I see him moving onwards through the scoffing crowd, and on his face is stamped the truest, the tenderest compassion. I see him with his foot upon the ark, turning once again a look of sympathy upon the mocking crew, and for the last time lifting up his voice in pathetic remonstrance and affectionate expostulation! And the laugh grows louder at his expense:

from lip to lip flies the impious jest. They breathe more freely as this meddling fellow goes on board, and they behold the door closing on "the preacher of righteousness" who had presumed to denounce their sins and to interfere with their godless pleasures.

And how solemn must have been the feelings of Noah as within the ark he awaited the coming of the threatened judgment. With what thankfulness, and yet with what holy awe, did he find himself saved in the stronghold of the Lord's providing! Vain were the attempt to picture the emotions which must have stirred his soul to its very depths during the seven days that intervened before the breaking forth of the Almighty's vengeance. As yet there was no token of the flood. All was calm and still without, but it was the calmness which precedes the storm; it was the stillness which forebodes the hurricane. There was an awful pause: the thunder-cloud was gathering; the lightning was being condensed. Nevertheless the men of the world see no danger. Nature is as fair as ever: the last morning breaks brightly upon the earth; the pursuit of amusement and business is carried on as usual. The haunts of pleasure,

the marts of traffic, are as crowded as ever; men are intent upon their buying and selling, their planting and building, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. All is gay and joyous, and there is no gloomy prophet of evil to mar the festivity of the scene, for *he* is shut up in that huge building which looms largely in the distance.

But hark! Why pauses the merriment when at its loudest? Why does the man of business falter in the very midst of his traffic? Why hurries the bridegroom out of his chamber? Why comes the bride out of her closet? Why do all faces gather blackness, and why is the voice of gladness changed into the cry of alarm? Look yonder, where the lightning gleams on the troubled air, where from the opened windows of heaven pours down the bursting torrent! The ear is stunned as with a rushing mighty voice of many waters, for "the fountains of the great deep are broken up," and the flood rolls terribly in upon the earth. And now one wild wail of terror rises fearfully aloft; cries of agony and despair are heard swelling on the gale. They run to and fro; they go into the clefts and into the tops of the rugged rock;

they climb the loftiest mountains; they contrive a thousand modes of escape: but all in vain! The waters rise higher and higher; the flood prevails; they are unable to flee from the righteous vengeance of God. "They knew not," says our Lord, "till the flood came and took them all away." They might have known: they had warning enough; they had time enough; and every word of Noah's mouth and every stroke of Noah's hammer, as he went on year after year preparing the ark, spake in the language of entreaty and appeal to their consciences and their hearts. They might have known, for the Spirit of God pleaded with them through the mouth of the holy patriarch, and called them to turn and not die. And now, because they would not "know the things which belonged to their peace," they were "made to eat of the fruit of their own ways, and to be filled with their own devices." How full of terrible agony must have been the discovery that Noah, whom they mocked and derided, had after all chosen the better part, while they themselves had been the foolish and the unwise! And with what a biting and bitter remorse,—with what a cry for help when help was hopeless, with what a voice,

strong in its fearful despair,—would they call upon Noah to receive them into the ark,—would they pray to God for mercy! See how they strain their eyes, with a wild and intense longing, toward the solitary spot, amidst the surrounding desolation, where alone peace and security and rest have made their abode. But all in vain! The ark moves farther and farther away, until it becomes a dark speck on the horizon; and while it rides majestically over the heaving billows, the wail of the perishing sounds out upon the air as the funeral dirge of a doomed world. An awful silence succeeds; for "all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man, and all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. Noah only remained, and they that were with him in the ark."

Suffer me to ask you, my brethren, does not this appalling history most plainly declare that sin must be exceeding sinful? Does not the destruction of all flesh,—the sin of the fathers being visited on the children, though these little ones, no doubt, were saved eternally,—

prove, aye, and prove undeniably, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to run counter to the law of God?

There is an interesting passage in the New Testament Scriptures which is closely connected with the history of Noah. You will find it in the third chapter of the first epistle of St. Peter and at the eighteenth verse: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

It is a confessedly difficult passage; and round it has gathered a whole library of controversy. It would be needless to mention all the meanings given by the several expositors to these verses; but the interpretation which seems to me most in harmony with the plain words of Scripture, is the going of our Lord after death to the place of departed spirits, and there "preaching to those spirits which had been

disobedient in the days of Noah." The Apostle seems to say that our Lord, in His disembodied state, went to the place where departed spirits are detained, and did there preach to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey Noah's voice when he called them to repentance and warned them to "flee from the wrath to come."

Supposing this interpretation to be correct, there is no room for purgatory nor for the doctrine of universal restoration; for the only spirits mentioned are those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. There is another interpretation which confines the preaching to the Holy Spirit of Christ speaking through the mouth of Noah to the sinners of his day. This fact is undoubtedly true, and it may be the Apostle's meaning. I have admitted that the passage is difficult, and where Scripture is obscure it becomes us reverently indeed to examine, but on no account to dogmatize. We must leave this and other dimly-revealed matters to the day when "things hard to be understood" shall be made plain, and a flood of light shall be thrown on the dealings and dispensations of God.

We have now to do with the appalling

judgment that overtook a world abandoned to wickedness. The story is full of awful meaning. "Be sure your sin will find you out:" "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Some of these antediluvian sinners may have been converted under the preaching of Noah, during those 120 years; and through death God may have taken them away from the evil to come. Of this nothing is said; but this we know,—that all who were on the earth when the windows of heaven were opened, and the great deep was broken up, even children who suffered for the sins of their parents, were swept off the face of the earth for their sins, and that only Noah and his house were saved.

Leaving these thoughts, I ask your attention to a future scene,—a scene of which the deluge was but a type. The world which once passed under the baptism of water is reserved unto a baptism of fire. And our Lord tells us that the circumstances which preceded the flood shall be reproduced at His second coming in judgment: the two events shall in many respects be parallel. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man."

Sin will be rife in the world: "there shall come

in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

But some, like Noah, shall "find grace in the eyes of the Lord;" and they shall be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." Their "loins will be girt, and their lamps burning, and they themselves like unto men who are waiting for their Lord." Their hopes being centred on the Rock of Ages, they will stand unmoved by the derision and scorn of an unbelieving world.

Preachers of righteousness will again and again sound the cry of warning and alarm in the ears of the ungodly, and will urge men to "flee from the wrath to come:" yet all to no purpose. They will reject the counsel, and despise the warning, and look upon those who give it as men of a wild and heated enthusiasm.

And the faith of God's people,—their solemn conviction that there is a God who reigneth in the earth; their affectionate counsels, their upright example, will "condemn the world of unbelief," and leave it wholly without excuse.

And so will it continue to the end. The last morning shall dawn as usual: all men will be saying, "Peace and safety." The merchant will be at his ledger; the reveller in the tavern; the man of pleasure at his club; the woman of fashion at her toilet; the tradesmen in his shop, and the farmer at his plough. The world shall be immersed in its accustomed cares and pleasures; and all minds shall be as intent upon gain, and business, and amusement, as if nothing were ever to interrupt the ordinary occupations of this life. But why do all faces gather terror? Why is the laugh suddenly hushed upon the careless lip? Why this consternation, and confusion, and alarm? "The sign of the Son of man" is seen approaching in the heavens. "Behold the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth." "Behold He cometh with clouds: every eye sees Him," and every heart knows Him; and "they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth wail because of Him." In their agony they shall strive to "hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne,

and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Ah, how the souls of the impenitent shall be torn with a terrible agony, as they see the people of God,—those who had been moved to take shelter in the only hiding place,—in Him who is "a covert from the tempest, and a refuge from the storm,—entering in with their Lord to the marriage supper of the Lamb, while they themselves are "shut out." "Shut out?" Frightful doom! "Shut out" amid the fiery ruin and devouring flames, beneath whose power the elements melt with fervent heat, and which shall burn to the very lowest hell. What would they give now to enter into the ark, and be safe under the shadow of the Almighty wing!

It is said of Noah, that "the Lord shut him in." There was no danger, therefore, that the flood rising without could reach him, or the storm that was raging could harm him; the security within was perfect, the peace was unbroken. And when the Lord has gathered His people from the four winds of heaven, and admits them into the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning, He shall "shut them in." Whatever might endanger their happiness or disturb their enjoyment, shall be excluded.

The "fulness of joy," and "pleasures that are for evermore," these shall be their portion. Amongst which class should you like *your* immortality to be cast; with the excluded or with the admitted? If with the latter, remember you must enter into the ark now: here alone is safety. Are you in Christ? Or are you still shutting yourself out for the sake of some worldly gain or enjoyment, through self-righteousness or carelessness, or neglect of the great salvation? Be wise in this your day. "The longsuffering of God is waiting." The door into the ark stands open. The Spirit is preaching through Bibles, and ministers, and ordinances, and the still small voice of conscience; and "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, *we* pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." "Turn ye, then, turn ye; for why will ye die?" There is no time for debate, no time for delay. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." To-morrow the storm may have burst, and the thunder-bolts descended. "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation." Leap in, for your very life, before the door closes, and you are shut out for ever!

And now with the earnest desire that you may

"win Christ and be found in Him," "I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace." I pray that when this earth and these heavens shall be dissolved, you may be found among that glorious company of all true believers, who when the Lord's indignation is overpast, shall inherit the "new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," and be "for ever with the Lord."

V.

Abraham's Pilgrim Life.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."—HEBREWS xi. 8, 9, 10.

WITH these words the Apostle introduces us to a new dispensation, and selects from the patriarchal times an eminent illustration of the working of that "faith" which "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

We left the ark riding in lonely majesty over the waters which entombed an unbelieving generation, and bearing Noah and his family—the

sole survivors of a world's ruin—within its secret chambers.

And now years have passed away. God has sworn that He will no more destroy the earth with a flood; its provinces have been overspread by the descendants of Noah, and the elements of good and evil are again at war in the world. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent again strive for the mastery, as they did when Abel fell beneath the murderous hatred of Cain; as they did when Enoch preached to the ungodly of the coming of the Lord to judgment; as they did when Noah, by his obedience, "condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is through faith." But as generation succeeds to generation, God's purpose in the election of grace is more fully and clearly developed. We can trace it from the fall to the flood; and now, on the threshold of the new world, we see it in the selection of Shem as the ancestor of the line which should inherit the blessing, and in the setting apart of Abraham from among the sons of Terah as the covenant representative of the promised seed. Abraham holds a distinguished place amongst those olden saints who lived between the flood and the

giving of the Law. He is described in the sacred oracles as "the father of the faithful, and the friend of God." He is not only blessed himself, but a fountain of blessedness to the world. It was but natural, then, that the Apostle should propose to us the example of this patriarch when he would illustrate the power of faith, and urge us to become "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And designing, as he did, to give several instances of the effectual working of Abraham's faith, he commences, as might have been expected, with that which lay at the foundation of the patriarch's trust and obedience,—namely, the call and command of God. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

It will be well to consider the circumstances in which Abraham was placed when he was called of God.

Although Noah died only two years before this patriarch's birth, and the records of the Deluge must therefore have been fresh in the minds of men, and traces of its desolations must have been scattered upon all sides, yet, even in

Abraham's time, wickedness was rife on the earth, and the knowledge of the true God was darkened and overclouded by superstition. The world seems to have been wholly given over to idolatry. Even the family of Shem, out of which the Messiah was to spring, was familiar with its abominations. If we read of some righteous men who adhered to the worship of Jehovah and lifted up a standard against the abounding ungodliness of their time, they were but solitary exceptions to the general rule of iniquity, and stood forth as single stars amid the darkness of the surrounding night. Thus Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and peace, was a witness for the true God in Canaan; and Job, the man of patience and uprightness, offered unto the Lord a perfect service in the fertile plains of Arabia.

But the household of Terah, not excepting Abraham himself, was defiled by the almost universal corruption of the times. The testimony of Joshua is decisive on this point: "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods." It was whilst Abraham was thus dwelling

in his father's house in Ur, a partaker of its sins that he received his first communication from God. Although this is a point on which we might be doubtful had we only the book of Genesis as a guide,—for there it might be inferred from the sacred text that Abraham removed from Ur at the suggestion of his father Terah,—yet the question is put to rest by Stephen, in his address to the Council: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, *before* he dwelt in Charran," or Haran, "and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I will show thee." And these words of Stephen throw a light upon the opening verse of the twelfth chapter of Genesis, where it is written respecting Abraham now sojourning in Haran, "Now the Lord *had* said unto Abraham (the Divine call being thrown back to an earlier period of the patriarch's history), Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee,

and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Let me now direct your attention to the call of Abraham. He is dwelling in a world lying in wickedness: member of a family which served other gods besides the Lord of heaven and earth. "The Lord of glory" suddenly appears to him. He alone from among all the world,—he alone from among all his father's house,—is singled out for the high honour of such a heavenly visitation. There is a visible manifestation of the Second Person in the ever-blessed Trinity; and the voice of the Word is heard in authoritative command as well as in gracious promise.

The Lord having chosen Abraham as a vessel appointed unto honour, commands him to "get out from his country and kindred," and accompanies the call with the promise of a blessing: "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing." Abraham believes the promise: he takes "the God of glory" at His word, and "his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." Being justified by grace, through faith, he is henceforth "the friend of God," and walks before Him in holy and confiding communion. He permits no

apparent difficulties to shake his trust in the Divine promise; and though now "an aged man, ready to perish,"—childless,—"a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth," without power, or wealth, or inheritance, "he staggers not at the word of God;" but receiving the testimony with all undoubting simplicity, commences his pilgrimage in ignorance as to whither he is going. Behold the mighty power of faith! It makes the crooked straight, and rough places smooth. It harbours no objections, admits of no obstacles. Fronting every difficulty, facing every danger, this is its confident language: "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." What is it to Abraham that Sarah is barren, if the Lord promise that he shall be "the father of a great nation"? What is it that he "has none inheritance, no, not so much as to set his foot on," if the Lord declares, "Unto thee will I give the land for an everlasting possession"? What is it that he is solitary, and friendless, and unknown, if the Lord assures him, "I will make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing"? "None of these things move him;" he "knows whom he has believed;" and he sets out on his pilgrim way, believing that what God

had promised that He was able to perform. "He commits himself unto God as unto a faithful Creator," and leaves the future entirely in His hands. He feels the trials that beset the path of obedience to the Lord's call and command: he cannot help doing so; but they do not interfere with his prompt and willing submission. The dearest home ties are to be rent asunder; the strongest bonds of nature are to be broken; the tent which sheltered him, and the friends of long association, are to be forsaken. His sole companions are to be his wife, his father, and Lot, his nephew; all the others must be left behind, for the world holds them in its grasp, and they have no wish to expose themselves to the hardships which are sure to befall the emigrants. You can measure the strength of Abraham's faith by the greatness of Abraham's trial. Add to this that he had received no distinct intelligence concerning the place whither he was to go. The Lord had merely said, "Get thee out unto a land that I will show thee." His destination was unknown. The way was dark, the end uncertain: no pillar of cloud by day, no pillar of fire by night; but he felt that God was with him of a truth, and that was

enough. "I will bless thee." This was knowledge sufficient for him; he needed no more; he asked for no more. And so "he went out, not knowing whither he went."

The same voice which of old addressed the patriarch speaks in terms as absolute, as peremptory to every son of man who is willing to be saved: "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." You know the Saviour's law of discipleship: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after Me, is not worthy of Me." You are not, like Abraham, called upon to bid a last adieu to the friends you love, or to tear yourself from the relatives who shed the charm of affection over your home; but you *are* called to a trial perhaps as painful, —to show them that you are no longer the man you were, and that henceforth your life must be different from what it has ever been. You must prove to them that your love to God is para-

mount to every other affection; that whilst you are one with them in presence, you are no longer one with them in tastes and pursuits. To give up the world, not to go out of the world, is the duty required of the Christian. The Gospel does not bid the rich man strip himself of his wealth, but bids him put away the love of it; it does not tell the man in authority to descend to a lower station, but tells him to "walk humbly with his God;" it does not require a man surrounded by the enjoyments and comforts of home to go forth a wanderer from the domestic circle, but it requires him to "mortify his affections," to "set them on things above." And this, my brother, is what is demanded of *you*. You are to give your heart to God. You are to "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness." And if you have the faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," you will at once set about the renunciation of things hitherto held desirable and dear, and engage in the pursuit of other things which have hitherto been neglected and uncared for. This lesson is taught you by

the example of Abraham. He gave a plain indication of his trust in God by a visible act of obedience. He left the home of his birth, and sought a strange country at the command of God: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

But there are other truths connected with this patriarch's faith to which I would now direct your thoughts. The Apostle tells us that "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

The Apostle's meaning is this: that even when Abraham reached the land of Canaan, he abode there as a stranger, and not as the possessor of the land; for, to use the words of the martyred Stephen, "God gave him none inheritance in Canaan, no, not so much as to set his foot on." Though dwelling in the land promised to him, and to his seed after him, he was content to be a pilgrim still, wandering about from place to place; now pitching his tent, now striking it;

sojourning now in Moreh, and now in Bethel; to-day in the plains of Mamre, to-morrow in the country of Hebron. He built him no house in the land of his sojourn; purchased no ground, bought no possession, save one. He did buy the field of Ephron, and the cave of Machpelah. And why? that it might be a burying-place for his dead! All his possession in the land of promise was,—*a grave.* Impressive thought! The fact is a sermon in itself.

In "tabernacles," or tents, the patriarch was content to dwell, as yet not receiving the fulfilment of the promises, but patiently waiting for their accomplishment, and preserving his trust unshaken in the faithfulness of God. His faith sustained him in the midst of disappointed hope and delay of expected good,—in the midst of companionship that must have sadly grieved his soul (for the Canaanite was then in the land"), —and in the midst of surrounding difficulties and distress. He might have returned to the place of his fathers, where he would have found a settled habitation; but he is "stedfast, unmoveable," and confiding undoubtingly in the Lord's love and goodness. This is true faith, a faith that faints not and fails not; a faith which

triumphs over sense, resists temptation which would shake it, works by love, endures patiently unto the end.

Brethren, is this "faith" yours? You may be a professor, offended perhaps if the reality of your profession be doubted; but how are you proving its sincerity? Is your life that of one who is confessedly living in "a strange country"? Do you act from day to day like those who do not account this world to be their rest, but are "seeking a better country, even a heavenly"? This is a good test. The real Christian is "a stranger and pilgrim on the earth." His *home* is not here, it is above; his *heart* is not here, it is in heaven; his *hope* is not here, it is in that bright world where his Saviour is sitting at the right hand of God. Even amid much to render him happy, and to make his lot blessed, his confession will be that of David, who, seated on a royal throne, and in possession of splendour and greatness, could say, "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

You may have met in your life some traveller from a distant land, who has left the place of his birth that he may wander for a time through a foreign country. What has most occupied

his thoughts and engaged his conversation,—what has been the topic at which his eye kindled most and his cheek flushed most and his heart throbbed most? His home! There may be scenes of beauty and objects of interest around him; much to delight the senses and captivate the imagination: but however he may love to linger for a season amid objects of grandeur and sublimity, his heart always turns towards *home*, and he looks forward to the period when he shall once more shelter himself beneath its roof. The purchases he makes are all for the adornment of that home; the treasures he takes away are all for its enrichment. So should it be with the man travelling Zionward. His thoughts should be much on the joys of heaven, his conversation be of its glories, and his most coveted possessions should be those qualifications which form meetness for its longed-for inheritance.

Brethren, does our character answer at all to such a description? Has the world to which we profess to be going a paramount influence over our thoughts, words, and conduct? It must be that the Christian, while in the world, has intercourse with the world in the relationships of

social life, in the transactions of business, in the engagements of commerce. But let him never forget that, though in it, he is not to be of it,—that Christ's people are "the salt of the earth," to season it with good; "the light of the world," to illumine its darkness; that it is their duty to sustain a holy and consistent walk, to be "living epistles, read and known of all men, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." Their high standing is never to be compromised: they are ever to "let their light shine" brightly "before men," testifying for the Lord and His truth, and "having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

There is one other thought suggested by the passage of Scripture under review: *the hope* which upheld Abraham in his pilgrimage, for his faith was "the substance of things hoped for:" "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

When he left his native land, it was not as an unwilling exile, uncheered by promise, unsustained by hope; but he went forth as one who "desired a better country" than that from which he came out. God had promised him a city and a country; and, relying on that promise, he was

satisfied to forego the present, that he might secure a future and a better inheritance. And, in like manner, God wins the Christian from the world. He does not bid him surrender an old possession, without at the same time holding forth the attraction of a new one, and a more valuable. He bids him forsake earth, that He may give him heaven. He asks him to abandon pleasures that "perish in the using," for pleasures that "are for evermore;" and "riches, that make to themselves wings, and fly away," for "treasures that the moth cannot corrupt, and the thief cannot steal;" honours that he cannot carry beyond the grave, for the crowns and sceptres of a glorious immortality. He never summons him to make any sacrifice without proposing a bright "recompense of reward." Thus it is that our heavenly Father "draws" His people "with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love." Thus it is He binds them over to His service, and lures them to become "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

My brother, who in thy passage through thine earthly pilgrimage art heavily afflicted, and tried, and tempted, — who findest the journey rough and the way hard, — look for-

ward, upward, heavenward, to that "city which hath foundations," and be of good cheer. Yet a little while, and this pilgrim life shall be ended. Then shall we enter the gates of that city, the stones of which are dug from no earthly quarry, fashioned by no human hand, and reared by no mortal skill. Its Architect is Divine: its "Builder and Maker is God." It is established upon the holy hills, and, unlike the tabernacles of earth, can never be removed. Think of *the glories* of this city. Its streets are golden, its walls are jasper; each gate is a single pearl, its foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones. It needs not the sun by day, nor the moon by night, "for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Through the midst of its street the river of life pours its crystal waters, and on either side of the river there spread the waving branches of the tree of life, richly laden with twelve varieties of fruits. Think of its *happiness*. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." In this city shall be our home, for here shall be also our Father, and

Elder Brother, and the Holy Spirit the sanctifier, and the whole family in heaven and earth named after the name of Christ. What a hope to animate, to elevate, to withdraw the mind from earth, and to fasten it on heaven and on God! It is a hope which should inspire with new vigour the pulses of the spiritual life, throw a fresh energy into our faith, and brace the whole inner man to "run with patience the race that is set before us."

Brethren, if you are amongst the believing, I summon you to greater earnestness and further efforts in the cause of God and of Christ. Let us "look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The new Jerusalem shall yet descend from God as a bride adorned for her husband; and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and He shall be their God."

Have you this hope? If so, blessed are you. But if not, I summon you to repent and believe the Gospel. The gate of the city is still open,—open day and night, "and yet there is room."

You may enter if you are willing. The only limitation is that you enter by the appointed way. "I am the Way," says He who has set before us an open door: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

VI.

Sarah.

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—HEBREWS xi. 11, 12, 13.

WE have considered the trial and triumph of Abraham's faith. We have seen how "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness," and how he rejoiced throughout his pilgrim life, as "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

And now the Apostle singles out Sarah as an illustration of faith's power and an example of faith's reward.

All that we know of Sarah's early history is what Abraham himself has left on record concerning her. In his interview with Abimelech he says she was his half-sister, the daughter of his father, though not the daughter of his mother. With Abraham she came out from her idolatrous kindred, and with him was willing to lead the life of a stranger and a pilgrim. During the ten years' tabernacle sojourn in the land of Canaan she was the faithful companion of her husband, the sharer of his joys and sorrows, and witness of all the mercies bestowed upon him by God. Although on two occasions she became partaker of her husband's duplicity, and though she had recourse to carnal devices to accomplish the Divine purpose, yet was she on the whole one of the holy women who trusted in God, and "whose adorning was the hidden man of the heart," even "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." St. Peter, commending her obedience to Abraham as her lord, proposes her as an example to Christian matrons, while all believing women who do well and have no reason to fear, are said to be "her daughters."

Let us look at the instance of Sarah's faith to

which the Apostle refers, and at the reward with which it was crowned.

When God called Abraham out of the country of the Chaldees, and brought him into the borders of Canaan, He told him that He would give that land to his offspring. But Sarah had no assurance that she should be the mother of the promised seed. Even Abraham did not certainly know whether the son from whom a great nation was to spring was to be the child of adoption or the child of his own body. Therefore as years went by and no heir was born to gladden the patriarch's household, and God was silent on the point of Sarah's motherhood, the wife proposed to her husband that he should take Hagar, his bondwoman, to be his wife. Had she herself before this time received the promise of a son, she would have been an example rather of unbelief than of faith. Abraham himself had no certain knowledge in the matter; for at length he ventures to expostulate with God, and to remind Him of His promise to himself, and to plead that it was still unfulfilled. At the beginning of the fifteenth chapter we find Abraham laying his case before God. "After these things the word of the Lord came

unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." God graciously answers His pleading servant, and promises that he shall be "the father of a great nation." "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be." But whilst God promises that Abraham shall be a father, He says nothing about Sarah: He is silent on the point as to whether she is to be the mother of the nation that is to spring from his loins. This uncertainty, as I have said, may have influenced her to give that counsel to her husband which led to so much sorrow and strife in the household, so many jealousies and heart-burnings. Ishmael was the fruit of Hagar's marriage, and for the fourteen years in which the boy was growing up

to manhood he may have been regarded as the promised seed: but at length God breaks the silence again, and declares that Sarah, not Hagar, shall be "a mother of nations," and that "Kings of people shall be of her." Even Abraham's faith is almost staggered by this; and when Sarah hears the same promise from the lips of the angel who visited them on the plains of Mamre, "she laughs within herself" at the apparent impossibility of its fulfilment. But the Lord reproved her unbelief, and met her doubts with the convincing question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And Sarah believed; and "because she judged Him faithful that promised," she became the mother of the seed from which He was to spring "in whom all families of the earth should be blessed."

We see from this instance of its working how "faith is the substance of things hoped for" and "the evidence of things not seen." Sarah believed God, and *the hope* that sprang from His promise was to "her a tree of life," and did not make her ashamed. She believed God, and His word was her *evidence* that as He had spoken so it should come to pass. Her faith had its reward. The name of her child indicates the

nature of the recompense. "Isaac" means "laughter,"—gladness of heart. "God," said the happy mother, "hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear me will laugh with me. And she said, Who could have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck? For I have borne him a son in his old age."

We have here, then, an *illustration of faith*, and *an evidence that it is pleasing to God.* God speaks, and we believe; God promises, and we rely. His word is our "evidence." And the evidence is sufficient; "for if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." Man may deceive, may disappoint, may be unable to fulfil; but God is both able and willing to carry out all His words to their fulfilment. "He is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it; hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" His faithfulness is a sure ground of trust, and it has been well said that "Sarah with her silver hairs and infant at her breast may well put unbelief to shame."

But it was not only in the birth of Isaac that faith had its just recompense of reward, but in the numbers without number of the chosen

people. "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

I have reminded you how when Abraham expostulated so pathetically with God because He had given him no heir, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad." Yea, He leads him out and places him beneath the glorious midnight of an Eastern sky, under the bright firmament of heaven undimned by a passing cloud; and there, in the still and solemn silence of the place and time, He thus addresses the patriarch: "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; and He said unto Him, So shall thy seed be." This promise Abraham accepting as the word of Him "who telleth the number of the stars," who quickeneth the dead, and who "calleth the things that are not as though they were,"—believed. He believed, and had peace in believing, and the Lord "counted it to him for righteousness." It was because he was to become the father of a multitude countless as

the sand upon the sea shore that his name was changed from Abram, "exalted father," to Abraham, "the father of many nations."

And Sarah's faith was equal to that of her husband: "she judged Him faithful that promised," and was rewarded by giving birth to the seed in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. "Against hope," the Apostle tells us, "he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken. He considered not his body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb." He was "strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform." So this solitary old man, a Syrian ready to perish, became, by the especial blessing of God, the father of a people whose numbers exceeded all calculation. "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs." When Joseph sent to Canaan for Jacob, and he and all his kindred went down into Egypt, they were but three-score and fifteen souls; yet 250 years afterwards Moses was able to say of the chosen people,

"Now the Lord hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude." And when 450 years had elapsed, Judah and Israel were many "as the sand which is by the sea in multitude." So the nation continued to increase; and neither the oppression of Pharaoh, nor the graves of the wilderness, nor their enemies the Hittites, the Amorites, and Perizzites, could hinder the fulfilment of the Divine will; and hence, in spite of bondage, in spite of war, in spite of desolations, they multiplied beyond all calculation.

And, brethren, God's promises to His ancient people, and their accomplishment in the past, are pledges that the yet unaccomplished promises to this people, still "beloved for the fathers' sake," shall be carried out to the very letter. Though they are now "peeled and scattered," strewn like the fragments of a wreck over the face of the world, yet the time is coming when God shall "say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." Then shall they come at His divine summons, "like doves flocking to their windows;" and "the waste and desolate places shall become too narrow by reason of the inhabitants." For the

words stand written on the pages of the Inspired Book: "I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord." "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto Me." And so, embracing not only the past, but the future, in his glance, St. Paul might well say, "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable."

But something more is told us of these worthies of the olden time. "These all,"—that is, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob—"died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They had lived in faith. Their faith failed them not during the days of their pilgrimage upon earth: though often tried it remained unshaken. They died in faith. Their faith was strong in the hour when heart and flesh fail; and they felt assured that the promises of God should be fulfilled. "They received not indeed the things promised;" they

received them in their revelation, but not in their realization. They looked beyond the multiplication of their descendants to the Lord in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed,—to Him who in the fulness of time was to bruise the serpent's head, and further the Divine glory in the salvation of sinners. This faith upheld Abraham as he pursued his pilgrim life: he "rejoiced to see Christ's day, and was glad;" and amid all his wanderings his hopes were fastened on "a city which hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is God." The advent of the Messiah was the hope of Jacob, and supported him under all the trials of his eventful life. When on his death-bed he blessed his twelve sons, and foretold their future greatness and their position in the land of Canaan, he spoke of the coming Shiloh and of the gathering of the people to Him; and predicted that from Joseph should proceed "the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." And looking forward to the coming of the Saviour, he exclaimed, in the language of faith and expectation, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!" It was literally true of these patriarchs that they saw the promises "afar off," through a long vista of intervening

years,—through the ages that were to roll over the world before "the Word" should be "made flesh and dwell among us." Their "faith" was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and made the future as real and distinct to their apprehension as the present. To the dull, glazed eye of unbelief, their hopes may have appeared visionary and deceptive, and the promises on which they were founded of uncertain fulfilment; but "they were persuaded of them," and believed that heaven and earth should sooner pass than one jot or tittle of them should fail. And, therefore, they embraced these promises as their confidence and stay, and they found in them support in life and consolation in death; and so they "trusted in God and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." They looked above the mists and clouds of earth, and beyond the gulf of time; and, "enduring as seeing Him who is invisible," their faith and expectation set towards the things that are unseen and eternal.

"They embraced the promises." The word in the original signifies "to salute," and has an evident reference to those forms of salutation by which it is customary to express cordial and

warm affection. "To embrace" the promises is for the heart to cleave to them with loving fondness, and to find in the hopes which they hold forth a subject of delight and complacency.

See, then, the nature of true faith: it stretches forth the arms of desire to embrace and to enfold, with satisfied affection, the blessings which God holds out to our hope. No wonder, therefore, that they who were gifted with such a faith as this, "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They avowed that their's was the stranger state, their's the pilgrim life: that their thoughts and desires were directed to "the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off." Their principles of action, their manners and ways, proved them to be aliens in a world that was not their home, in which they were sojourning for a season, through which they were passing to "a better country, even an heavenly." They were content to "dwell in tabernacles," refusing to accept any settlement in the land, lest they or their families should be contaminated by the evil of the inhabitants around them. So they passed onward with their flocks and herds, pitching their tents one day here and another there; sitting loosely to

the things of the world; and by keeping themselves apart from the inhabitants of the land, professed that they did not belong to the order of things in the midst of which they lived, but regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Abraham made this confession when, coming to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her, "he stood up before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." Jacob made this confession when he stood in the presence of Pharaoh and said, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." This was the confession of David many centuries after. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." These were all content to be "strangers and pilgrims," because their eyes were fixed on the far horizon, and they lived in the unseen. The

hope of the promised inheritance dwarfed the things of earth, and made them appear comparatively insignificant. "Abraham dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." And, so brethren, the tent life is the natural life of those whose fatherland is beyond the skies, whose "treasure is in heaven," whose "affections are set on things above." Their faith in God,—their hope of the Eternal—will lift them above the present, and emancipate them from the love of the creature. It will arm them against temptation, strengthen them in trial, make them tranquil in sorrow, and help them to live pure, and noble, and joyous lives. And, brethren, there is in such a truth as this a test whereby to try these lives of ours. What has most power over us,—the present or the future? things seen or unseen? What are the objects for which we are living? What are the hopes that have most influence over our conduct? In what ways do we show that we are different from "the men of this world, who have their portion in this life"? The man of the world has his home here, and his resting-place is upon

earth; nor does he look for anything beyond: all his enjoyments, and pleasures, and hopes, are bounded by the near horizon of the present. The unbeliever walks by sight: the believer walks by faith. How is it, then, with us? Do we not only confess ourselves "strangers and pilgrims upon earth;" but are we living the stranger and pilgrim life,—*our faith* grasping the promises of God, *our love* embracing the risen Saviour, and our hope sure and steadfast entering into that "within the veil"?

Let us show by our daily life, by our close walk with God, by the way in which we order our houses, by our dealings in business, by our uprightness, our honesty, our purity, our truthfulness, that we are "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The trials and difficulties of the journey shall be forgotten when "the heat and burden of the day shall have passed away." Then shall we enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God; then shall the weariness of the desert, and the toils of the pilgrimage, and the transitoriness of the tent, be exchanged for the consolations of the promised land, and the stability of that "City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

VII.

Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac.

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." —HEBREWS xi. 17—19.

THE history to which St. Paul alludes is among the most touching in the Sacred Volume. It is recorded with a simplicity as sublime as it is affecting: its beauty and its pathos equally lay hold of the imagination and impress the heart. "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Such is the severe test to which the Lord puts the patriarch's faith. Can you conceive of any command more likely, on natural grounds, to shake Abraham's trust in God? For had not the Almighty promised that through Isaac should come that great Deliverer in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed? And had not Abraham, relying on this promise, broken asunder the ties of home, country, and kindred, and become a stranger and a pilgrim in a strange land, and among a strange people? Is this the reward of so much self-sacrifice? Had he surrendered all to God, only that his hopes and expectations should end in the most cruel disappointment? Was Isaac, the child of promise, the son of his old age, so long waited for, so fondly welcomed when he came, after all to die: yea, to be laid upon the altar by a father's hand? And it seemed as if God delighted to inflict as much pain as possible, even in the manner in which the startling command was given. There is a heaping up of words, as if He took pleasure in cutting to the quick the heart of the sorrowing parent: "Take now thy son,"—nay, that is not all,—"thine only son." There was no other child in his house to comfort

his declining years, or to be the companion of his age; no other to compose his limbs in death, and follow him to the grave; no other to become the father of that mighty nation, numberless as the stars, countless as the sand, which God had assured him should spring from his loins: "Take now thy son, thine only son"—nay, even this is not enough—"Isaac, whom thou lovest." The lad who has been the staff of thy life; the child of many prayers and brightest hopes, in whom thy heart is centred. "Take Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Hard and trying command! We almost expect to hear some words of earnest expostulation issuing from the father's lips. He had before ventured to interfere between God and the wicked cities of the plain. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This had been his plea. May he not be bold in urging this plausible reason why he should not be called upon to slay his own son? God's promises, his own hopes, the fearfulness of the deed, all afforded warrant enough for thrilling supplication and expostulation. But the patriarch bows his

head before God, and is silent. If any words struggle to his lips, they were such as were in after ages uttered by the aged Eli: "It is the Lord: let Him do as seemeth Him good." We read of no hesitation on Abraham's part, nothing like a remonstrance; the obligation of the command is at once felt and acknowledged: he makes haste and delays not to obey. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him."

For three days must he travel from Beersheba to Mount Moriah; and for three days, without shrinking, did he pursue his painful journey. Every step he takes is over some fond hope crushed in the dust: each advancing stage brings him nearer to the grave of his joys. Yet, though "perplexed," he is "not in despair:" though "cast down," he is "not destroyed." "Against hope, he believes in hope." "He believes, and it is counted unto him for righteousness." He has full reliance on the promises of God, and so he calmly makes provision for the sacrifice of his son on Moriah. His faith is

the ground of his obedience: his obedience is the illustration of his faith; or, to use the words of the Apostle James, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" "For," asks the same Apostle again, "was not Abraham our father justified by works,"—that is, "was not his faith proved genuine by works,"—"when he had offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?"

But let us turn again to the narrative. When Abraham sees the place afar off where the sacrifice is to be made, he says unto his young men, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." And now he takes the wood of the burnt offering, and lays it upon Isaac his son: and he takes the fire in his hand, and the knife, and they go both of them together. For a little while they proceed in silence: the father has ample material for solemn thought, and it may be he is afraid to speak lest the tremulousness of his voice should betray something of the emotion that is working within. The son does not care to say much, the new scenes through which he passes fully occupy his mind, —strange objects, fresh mountain ranges, and

wide spread valleys, and sunny pasture lands, engage his attention; and besides, there is a deep expression in the father's eye which seems to set a seal upon the son's lips. At length as they travel on side by side, his thoughts revert to the sacrifice which is about to be offered; and a natural question, but one of the deepest pathos, considering their present circumstances, rises to his lips. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" And what can Abraham reply? Will not the fond yearnings of the parent break forth in this moment of trial, and express themselves in the deep, passionate language of affection and grief? But no: Abraham's answer is as calm as if his heart were a stranger to all emotion, as if he lived in a region removed far above all earthly hope or fear. "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." And now they proceed onward again in silence. Abraham is trusting in God; Isaac is trusting in his father. At last they reach the place of which the Lord had told him, and Abraham erects an altar, sets the wood in order, and

Isaac wonderingly awaits the accomplishment of his father's words, and reasons with himself as to where the lamb of God will be found. But now the terrible moment arrives. Abraham stretches forth his hand, lays hold of his son and proceeds to bind him for the sacrifice. Upon the young man's mind now flashes the whole truth. *He* is the lamb which God demands: *his* blood is to stain the altar! and, acknowledging the Lord's will, he patiently bows the head, and submits. I know not whether to admire most Abraham's obedience or Isaac's submission,—the father's willingness to offer, the son's readiness to be offered. They equally glorified God in this mysterious hour of trial. But even as I gaze upon this triumph of faith and patience,—faith overcoming nature, and "patience having her perfect work,"—Moriah fades away, and another hill, and another scene takes its place, and my soul is transported to ages far distant, and to a day, seeing which afar off, "Abraham rejoiced .... and was glad." Up the hill of scorn with aching feet and throbbing brow, and bending beneath the weight of His cross, moves the true Lamb of God. In the words of St. John: "He bear-

ing His cross, went forth unto a place called the place of a skull." With slow and fainting steps He bears it for a time, until it is transferred to another. And so He toils on to Calvary. "His visage is more marred than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men;" for He has "given His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He has not hidden His face from shame and spitting. He is oppressed and He is afflicted, yet He openeth not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." The Almighty Father "so loves the world," that He spares not His only Son, but gives Him up for us all, "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The everlasting Son submits to agony and death, that He may work out our deliverance from the curse, make an end of sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.

But let us return from Calvary to Moriah. Isaac is bound: Abraham lifts him up on the altar. The knife is seized; the father's arm is raised to give the deadly blow; the son's bosom is bared to receive it; and in another moment

the blood of that child of so much love and many hopes will well out from his young heart, and stain the father's hands! But the ordeal has been passed: Abraham has been weighed and *not* found wanting. The angel of the Lord suddenly interposes; and arresting the patriarch in the very act of dealing out death to his son, calls unto him out of heaven: "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

There are lessons to be learnt from this example of Abraham's faith by us, "upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The question arises, Is our faith of a similar

kind? I beseech you, examine its character, and sift its reality. God may yet put it to a severe trial, if He has not done so hitherto. He may ask you to surrender something that you love: some object of tender affection. He may break some tie, or sever some cord now closely twined around your heart; He may take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, and wound you in the very tenderest point. Your "Isaac," your fond one, best beloved,—that son so dutiful and so hopeful,—that partner of all your joys and sorrows, so sympathizing, so true, —that friend whom you love as your own soul, —with whom you walked to the house of God, and took sweet counsel,—may be demanded back by the God who lent him to you for a little season. It is through trying bereavements, and the anguish of tortured affection, that He often puts the question to His believing people: "Lovest thou Me more than these?"—more than a husband's or wife's endearments,—more than a child's deep affection,—more than a brother's or a sister's companionship,—more than a friend's trueheartedness,—more than worldly honour or riches, or any other object of earthly regard?

And if God should so try you,—if He has already so tried you, or appears about to do so, could you submit,—have you submitted cheerfully to His will? Can you yield the sacrifice He requires? Can you resign yourself to His pleasure? Dear brother, ask yourself, can your faith triumph even in such a moment of bitterness as that which may leave your home desolate, and your heart a blank? Can you lie still under the chastening hand of God,—not intrenched behind a barrier of stubborn defiance, or hardened indifference; submitting because you *must*, but acquiescing in a Father's will in the same trusting spirit of meekness that animated the heart of Job, when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Such submission as this is trying to flesh and blood,—nay, is impossible to flesh and blood; but it can be yours through imparted grace. Oh, if you have not such faith, ask for it: faith is the gift of God; and He,—blessed be His holy name!—"He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." "Ask, and you shall have, that your joy may be full." And having this Divine grace, you will be able in the darkest hour of trouble, or sorrow, or trial, or

temptation, to say with your Saviour, when He sweat the great sweat of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

There remains yet to be considered the specific character of that faith which made Abraham willing to offer up that only son of whom it was said, "in Isaac shall thy seed be called." The words of the Apostle are express touching the nature of the strong persuasion which upheld the hope of the patriarch through the whole course of his fiery trial. "He that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." I have already directed your attention to the doubt and suspicion which unbelief might have suggested to Abraham's mind. If the son is sacrificed, it seems as if all the promises must be made of none effect: no future people shall ever spring from his loins; the world shall never see the day of the Son of Man; the seed of the woman shall never bruise the serpent's head; there shall be no "Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world." But "Abraham believed in God:" his faith triumphed over every doubt. Though Isaac die, he shall

live again. The knife that drinks his blood, the fire that consumes his body, the wind that scatters his ashes, shall not interfere with one jot or one tittle that the Almighty hath said. Abraham relies on the power and truth of his covenant God; and resting unreservedly on the Lord's promises, "accounts that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead," and believes that He will do so rather than make void His word. "He staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to perform." Do not his own words, before parting from the two young men, seem to express this firm and confident trust? "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, *and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*" "He accounts that God is able" to re-animate the bleeding body of his son,—nay, this is not all: he accounts that God *will* restore him from the dead, that the promises may be fulfilled. This appears to be the especial direction of his faith. The child of promise is appointed to die, but Abraham's trust is not shaken. The Lord's word has gone

forth that he shall be the founder of a great nation, the source of spiritual blessings to the world, the channel of man's salvation. Abraham relies upon the covenant faithfulness of God to bring about the accomplishment of the Divine word, and this confidence sustains him under a trial which would have thrown a man of weaker faith into the darkness of despair.

Abraham had his reward: he received Isaac from the dead "in a figure." The meaning of which is, as Calvin explains it, "He received him as from the dead, in a figure or resemblance of the resurrection from the dead." In the mind of Abraham, Isaac had been dead for the three days during which he journeyed from Beersheba to Moriah. The sacrifice had been demanded, and he was resolved to render it willingly to the Lord; and now, in acknowledgment of the patriarch's obedient faith, Isaac, virtually dead, is restored to his father's embrace, and can offer up the homage of adoring praise in the land of the living. In the whole transaction we have a vivid representation of death and resurrection. Isaac is to Abraham for a little space as one that is dead, and after this God gives him back again to his father's arms. Nay, we have here

something more than this, even a clear, striking type of the atoning death, the three days' entombment, the glorious resurrection of the only begotten Son of God. Thus did the trial of Abraham's faith become the means, in the hands of a gracious God, of showing him, as in a mirror, the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, and gladdening his heart by the bright and hopeful vision.

Let us see how Abraham's faith in the resurrection of Isaac touches us.

"He was strong in the belief that God was able to raise him up even from the dead." God may ask us to give back the treasure He has lent us for a little season. And a blessed thing it is, if, when the Lord has need of those whom we love, we can bring ourselves to part with them to Him, even though our hearts bleed in the woe and agony of the parting hour. But what hope should sustain us in the hard struggle? The same that upheld Abraham; for are we not able to "account that God is able to raise our Isaacs up even from the dead"? We may not, indeed, expect to receive them back at once, as Lazarus was restored to his sister's arms, or the daughter of Jairus to her parent's embrace, or her only son

to the heart of the sorrowing widow. We might wish this, as we hang over the bed whereon lies the pale form of the being that was most dear to us on earth. We might have wild longings to recall the spirit to its deserted tenement, as with breaking heart we gaze upon the cold face of the dead. But the wish is fruitless; the longing is in vain: nay, both are selfish; for if the spirit has passed into the glories of the Lord's presence, and taken its place amongst the bright host of the redeemed, who that loves with a self-forgetting love could deliberately call it back to this world of "mourning, and lamentation and woe"? And both are sinful, if they lead us to murmur against God, and to rebel against His decrees. The Christian mourner has a better hope than the immediate raising of his loved one from the death-bed or the funeral bier. If it were possible for the dead to be restored to us, it could only be for a little season: again they must die; again we must weep their loss; again our hearts must be wrung with bitter anguish. Blessed be God, even as we press the cold hand and close the glazing eye, we can look forward to the hour when the tie of affection [illegible]rn asunder here shall be re-knit yonder; and

they that are taken away shall be given back once more to share our love. Blessed be God for that article of the Christian creed—"the Resurrection from the dead"! When we are called to part from a loved and loving friend, we may mourn for a time: Nature demands it; God permits it; but let us not sorrow as others who have no hope. When God demands your "Isaac," He would have you "account that He is able to raise him up even from the dead." Having this faith and this hope, be content to part for a time from those whom your soul loveth. Look forward to the time when the corruptible shall put on incorruption,—be "still, and know that He is God." True, you will have to wait for the consummation of your hope, and the time of waiting may be dreary and sad; but will not your submission and your patience receive an abundant recompense of reward when the Lord does come, and all His saints with Him, and when with those who have fallen asleep in Jesus you are made partaker of the inheritance prepared for the righteous from the beginning? If you have to linger behind, and life is weary, and the world has no charm—what then? "It is but a little while, and He that shall come will come,

and will not tarry." Then shall all sighing and sadness flee away for ever; and clad in the brightness of your glorified bodies, you, and every member of the elect and faithful Church shall be "for ever with the Lord." No parting there, no anguish, no weeping, no death; nothing to break the ever-deepening tide of blessedness and peace which shall flow on in one wide and glorious sweep throughout the eternity to come.

Brethren, let us have faith in God. Let us believe in the Word of Him who is faithful and cannot deny Himself, and to us God will be what He was to Abraham—"Jehovah-jireh:" that is, "the Lord will provide." And if faith abide, it will not only strengthen us as it did Abraham, making us strong to do, and patient to suffer; but it will be found unto praise and honour, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

VIII.

Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau.

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come."—HEBREWS xi. 20.

ISAAC, the son of Abraham, by Sarah, was the Child of Promise. Born out of due time, when his father was an hundred years old and his mother ninety, the parents themselves "laughed" with almost incredulous joy at the thought of such a wonderful event. The name "Isaac," or "laughter," was fitly chosen by God with reference to the supernatural nature of his birth,—the laughing joy which it brought to his father's tent. His life was peaceful and prosperous: the joy which greeted him at his birth was the prelude to a happy career. He had, indeed, his trials; and the bright sunshine was at times overclouded, the laughter turned into sadness. Still he lived in the faith of his father Abraham, and in that faith he died.

The particular instance of faith to which the Apostle alludes in my text, is the blessing which in his old age he, Isaac, gave to his sons, and through which was conveyed the promise unto the covenant seed. The history in the twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis is full of the deepest interest, though not without its difficulties: we see in it the Divine sovereignty and wisdom working effectually through human passions. To understand the text and the whole matter aright, we must go somewhat minutely into the history: it will reward our attentive consideration.

Let us go back to the birth of the twin brothers. When Rebekah was about to become the mother of the promised seed, she hastened to consult the Lord respecting the children that should be born. The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord." "And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger." This reply established a material difference between

Jacob and Esau, even while the children were not yet born; and it conveyed to the younger brother and his descendants not only a *national*, but also a *religious, pre-eminence* over the elder: it constituted Jacob the heir of all the temporal and spiritual privileges which usually centred in the firstborn; and by the priority which these gave, he became the head of his father's house. You will observe, then, in this appointment, the sovereignty of God, who confers the birthright and the blessing on the younger son. To this example of God's absolute supremacy in conferring His gifts on whom He will, St. Paul alludes in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and tenth verse: "When Rebekah also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth); it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Such is the inspired Apostle's commentary on the narrative of the inspired historian, Moses.

But observe that the announcement to Rebekah

of the marked distinction which was to prevail between the brothers was not uttered as a dark decree, but as a plain direction, which should bind the consciences and regulate the conduct of Isaac and his family. Had each member of the household been guided by the revelation of God's will,—had Isaac been satisfied that the birthright should be vested in the younger son, had Rebekah permitted God to accomplish His purposes and His promises in His own way, had Esau acquiesced in the sovereignty of God, had Jacob, instead of fraudulently wresting the covenant-blessing from his brother's hand, been content to wait until it should become his own as a matter of grace,—they would all have escaped much sin and many sorrows. But the very knowledge of God's will, which should have brought peace into the household, became an apple of discord, a root of unholy bitterness and domestic feud. And here it is worthy of observation how the Divine sovereignty in no respect interferes with human responsibility, and how man is a free and often an unconscious agent in bringing to pass the predetermined counsels of God. We have the manifestation of human character brought out in the various passions

which agitated the several members of this patriarchal home. In that little household were strongly at work all the motives which influence and control the world at large,—which stir the hearts of men and urge them on to action. The history of this family seems like a grand drama, acted upon a small stage: we see the selfish fondness of Isaac for Esau, the unhappy partiality of Rebekah for Jacob, the carnal appetites of the elder brother, the overreaching spirit of the younger. There is plot, and counter-plot, and rivalry, and stratagem, and strife: the whole array of those evil passions which prove that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

We have no lengthened record of these brothers' early life, but there is enough told to show us that their characters were widely different: "The boys grew: Esau became a cunning hunter, a man of the field; Jacob a plain man, dwelling in tents." The daring spirit of the elder found a congenial sphere in following the chase, and in all those adventurous pursuits which suit a bold and restless disposition. Jacob, again, was of a more domestic turn: he loved the quiet of the tent, and the calm delight of a

pastoral life; he tended the flocks as they fed in the valleys, or rested by the cooling stream; and to till the ground and make it fruitful had for him a pleasure and a charm. As the boys advanced in years, Esau became his father's, and Jacob his mother's, favourite. Here was the secret of the sin and sorrow that followed. What but evil could spring from this unhappy partiality? This indulgence of favouritism for a particular child, this giving to one of the family an undue place in the affections, is altogether inconsistent with the sacredness of parental duty, and with the strict justice which is essential to parental discipline. It is a thing to be avoided by every parent who would not introduce misery and unhappiness into the home, and who would not render fruitless all the care bestowed upon the children whom God has entrusted to their charge,—not to satisfy their selfish instincts, but to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Esau returns on a certain day weary and hungry from the chase, and feeling faint from fatigue, asks his brother to feed him with "that same red pottage," which, though always welcome, was doubly so after many hours of keen

excitement and toil. That Esau was a man of strong appetites and uncontrolled impulses, is evident from the narrative; for we are told that "he was called Edom, that is, red," from the fact of his being so fond of "that same red pottage" which he valued above his birthright. Jacob, seeking to secure the inheritance of the firstborn, forgetting that it was his already by the Divine decree, enters into a selfish bargain for the rights of primogeniture: "Sell me this day thy birthright." Esau agrees to the bargain without hesitation or delay. And Esau said, "Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" 'The birthright cannot keep me from starving. The birthright cannot appease my hunger—let me seize the present moment for enjoyment, and leave to my brother the contingent good.' Such may have been Esau's reasoning with himself, as he sought an excuse for immediate indulgence. His exclamation "Behold, I am at the point to die," could hardly have been justified by the necessity of the case. There was in his father's house bread enough and to spare, no doubt corn, and oil, and wine, and the deer his own hand had stricken; and had he been only

disposed to tarry, his hunger might very soon have been satisfied. But "that same red pottage," which tempted his craving appetite, was before him; and the weary huntsman was overcome by the sight of the savoury mess which his soul loved. For the sake of satisfying his hunger he despised his birthright, and earned for himself the title of the "profane Esau." "Profane," for he made over to his brother, not merely a temporal advantage, but the high honour of being the ancestor of that Saviour who was to spring from Isaac's seed, since the birthright and the blessing were inseparably connected.

But while Esau was thus guilty of profanity in selling the blessings of the firstborn for a mess of pottage, Jacob is greatly to be blamed for his part in the transaction. He takes advantage of his brother's hunger and fatigue, and to serve his own selfish ends entraps him in a snare. Why not give to the fainting huntsman freely, without money, and without price? Why drive a hard bargain? Why trade upon a brother's hunger? Why not be satisfied that the birthright was his by Divine promise, instead of attempting to anticipate God's time, and to take the matter out of God's hand into his own?

Thus was the conduct of both brothers marked by guilt. Jacob, taking advantage of Esau's impetuosity, became his subtle tempter; Esau, despising his birthright, sold it for the paltry price of "that same red pottage:" a wicked deed which admitted of no recall; "for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

I pass on to consider the circumstances alluded to in the text: and here we shall understand fully how human infirmity and sin are overruled by God to the bringing to pass of His own predetermined counsels.

Isaac, fancying that his latter end is near (though he lived for nearly fifty years longer), is anxious to convey by a solemn act the birthright to Esau, and to invest him with all the privileges of the first-born. Alas for the weakness of human faith! The aged patriarch, on what he thinks his death-bed, is resolved to run counter to the expressed will of God, and endeavours by a secret plot to confer on the elder son the blessing which God had said should belong only to the younger. Rebekah meets craft by craft. Instead of leaving the matter to God,—instead of remonstrating with

Isaac,—instead of seeking direction in prayer, she acts on the suggestion of her own heart; and, by a daring stratagem, secures the blessing for her favourite child. The partiality of the fond mother soon contrives a scheme by which she can outwit her blind and infirm husband. Jacob is easily won over to his mother's wishes. He objects at first, from prudence rather than principle; but once fully persuaded that he can practise the deception without any danger to himself, he proves an apt and ready scholar in the crooked ways of deceit. When the mother, acting as her son's tempter, seeks to allay his fears of detection, exclaiming with passionate energy, "Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice," he suffers her to clothe him in his brother's goodly raiment, and to cover his hands and neck with the skin of a kid that he had killed. Thus arrayed, he stands at the bedside of his aged parent with a lie in his mouth, a lie on his neck, a lie in his hand, playing the hypocrite, deceiving a blind old man, and that man his own father.

And now we come to Esau's part in this domestic drama. He is the one of the whole party who most attracts our sympathy: we are

carried away by his sorrow; we feel for the grief and disappointment of the injured man. How we are touched by that "great and exceeding bitter cry" which seems to tear the very heart of Esau, when he learns that his father had already given away the blessing. We sympathize with his wild and passionate outburst of sorrow: "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" We are disposed to echo his reproach against a deceiving brother: "Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." How pathetic, too, the manner in which he appeals to his father a second time: "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" And when the trembling old man assures him in reply that he had made Jacob lord, and given him his brethren for servants, and had sustained him with corn and wine, and inquires in sorrowful bewilderment, "What shall I do now unto thee, my son?" to what heart-rending sorrow,—to what a vehemence of grief,—to what an agony of despair he abandons himself! "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father! And Esau lifted up his

voice and wept." Is there not something inexpressibly touching in the spectacle of that strong man bowed with grief,—the sorrow of years crowding into a moment,—as he hears that the blessing of the firstborn is lost to him for ever?

And yet we must not allow our sympathy with the wrongs of Esau to blind our eyes to his guilt. Had he not by his own deliberate act sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of "that same red pottage"? Was it right, then, that he should seek to recover by fraud what he had lost through folly?—that he should turn his father's partiality into a means of unrighteously regaining the blessing which was no longer his own? Nay, was he not aware when he consented to sell the birthright, and again when by overreaching Jacob he sought to recover the blessing, that it was the purpose and counsel of God that the order of nature was to be reversed, and that "the elder should serve the younger"? Had he acquiesced in the will of God he would not have made the birthright the subject of barter at all; or if he had been tempted by circumstances to commit so heinous a sin, he would, on reflection, have acknowledged his sin, and sought pardon for his transgression, and been contented that

Jacob should be the centre of blessing and the ancestor of the promised seed.

In reviewing the incidents connected with this transmission of the blessing we see how remarkably human policy and sin are made to accomplish the purposes of God. Here are four persons, all weaving their own little web of schemes and plots: each moved by his own sinful and selfish desires, yet severally bringing about what God had before determined should take place. The wisdom and the foresight, God's; man's the responsibility and the sin. What a striking instance of the Lord's overruling! A plain and practical proof that God "makes the very wrath of man to praise Him."

Such is this remarkable and interesting history. And now it may occur to you to ask how in the midst of human plot and passion in which Isaac, had he been able, would have conveyed the blessing to Esau, how can it be said that "by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come"?

The "faith" of Isaac was seen in this: he believed that by virtue of the covenant the promise was sure to the seed. He believed, in accordance with a revelation from God, that he

could convey it by solemn benediction. He was wrong in the application of the blessing which he would fain have conferred upon Esau; but "the blessing" was given in "faith," in full confidence that it would be fulfilled. The blessing was a prophecy of things to come, and he took the Divine word as evidence that the benediction would be accomplished to the letter. So "by faith .... of things to come" he blessed Jacob. And what blessing did he give him? (Gen. xxvii. 28, 29.) "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethen, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." And again, before he sends Jacob to Padan-aram (Gen. xxviii. 3, 4): "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." The blessing pronounced on Esau was not like this (Gen. xxvii. 39, 40):

"Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above: and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

Both these blessings or prophecies, were fulfilled in Jacob and Esau and their descendants: according as Isaac spake, so it came to pass. With their fulfilment we have nothing at present to do. I would only draw your attention to the difference in the blessings bestowed upon the brothers.

The blessing given to Jacob was eminently spiritual, assuring to its object the favour and love of the Most High. He, too, had the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, with ability and strength to war; but these mercies are expressly said to be the fruits of the Divine favour. "God give them to thee;" for "the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." "Cursed be every one that curseth thee;" in other words, Jacob's enemies were to be God's enemies: "Blessed be he that blesseth thee;" Jacob's friends were God's friends. And thus the prophetic words

of Isaac conveyed to Jacob the heritage of Abraham, that he should be "the father of a multitude of people." These blessings, being spiritual, were also eternal. The blessing on Esau is wholly of the earth, earthly: the name of God as its bestower is not even mentioned. He is promised "the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven," ability and strength to war; but these are not said to come from God, or to be bestowed as marks of Divine favour. The blessing is from first to last earthly, and therefore temporary,—bounded by the present world, and nothing in it which reaches into eternity. And so it has been. While the Jews, descendants of Jacob, have been blessed, and of them came the Messiah,—while they are still "beloved for their father's sake," for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,"—Esau's descendants are no more a nation: Edom itself is a wilderness, and the name of Edom a name and nothing more.

Brethren, do we not see which blessing is to be preferred?—The spiritual, not the earthly. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." What are "the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth" in

themselves? They are perishing and perishable. "The things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." Even now God's blessing is infinitely better than the greatest worldly success. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart," says the Psalmist, "more than in the time when their corn and wine increased." "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." "The blessing of the Lord is in *the house* of the righteous," and I am sure it is in *his heart;* for "joy and gladness are found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

And if this for *the present*, what for *the future?* Esau's blessing, however filled with worldly prosperity, is but temporary. "All flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." There may be carnal pleasures, and delights, and gratifications now; but they shall pass. And what then? "It shall be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth: but he awaketh, and his soul is empty." For the idea of happiness without God is only a dream, a delusive dream, a dream to be followed

by a terrible awaking: for that awaking shall admit of no sleep, no dreams,—nothing but the dread reality of hell. "Seek," then, "those things which are above,—which do not perish in the using:" "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Let us "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." So doing, we shall be visited with the favour which God bears to His people. "He will lead us forth by the right way, until we reach the city of habitation;" and when the world passes away and we fall asleep in Jesus, it will be to find that "the everlasting arms are beneath us,—the eternal God our Refuge."

And when we awake,—ah, when we awake!—we shall be "satisfied with His likeness."

IX.

The Faith of Jacob on his Death-bed.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." —HEBREWS xi. 21.

THE last scene in the life of Jacob is here brought before us. The patriarch had been for a few years dwelling amid the rich pastoral lands of Goshen; and when the time drew nigh that he must be gathered to his rest, Joseph, informed of the approaching end of his father, hastens with his two sons to the bedside of the infirm old man, that they may receive a blessing from his dying lips. Such is the touching scene alluded to by the Apostle. Let us with reverence take our places round the bed of the aged patriarch; and let us consider what renders the faith of Jacob worthy of being registered by St. Paul amongst the other exam-

ples of this illustrious grace, as "when he is a dying, he blesses both the sons of Joseph; and worships, leaning upon the top of his staff."

The patriarch had now reached an age when natural weakness was weighing him down to the grave. He had sojourned some little time in Egypt, and the years of his life were an hundred and forty-seven. We read in the sacred narrative, that "his eyes were dim for age, so that he could not see, and the time drew nigh that Israel must die." When it was told Joseph, saying, "Behold, thy father is sick," he took with him his two sons, and with filial devotion hastened to his presence. As soon as Israel was informed of their coming, "he strengthened himself, and sat up upon his bed." The first thing which the dying patriarch does, after reverting to the promise which God made to him at Luz,—that he would bless him, and make him fruitful, and give him the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, is to adopt the two sons of Joseph for his own: "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine: as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine." Joseph then brings the boys to his father, and

places Ephraim the younger near the left hand of Jacob, and Manasseh the elder near his right hand, that the patriarch may lay a hand on the head of each, and bless them in the name of the Lord. But though the eyes of Israel were dim with age, he did not fall into the wishes of Joseph in the benediction which he gave; but, "guiding his hand wittingly, he stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's, who was the firstborn." As soon as Joseph observed this, it displeased him; and, holding up his father's right hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to that of Manasseh, he remonstrated: "Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn: put thy right hand upon his head." But Jacob refused: "I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." Having thus given the younger precedence over the elder, Israel breathes out his blessing in the following beautiful words: "God, before Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel

which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Such are the particulars to which I now ask your attention; and the question arises, In what way was the patriarch's "faith" manifested through the blessing which he gave to Joseph's sons?

(1) The reality of the patriarch's faith was shown forth in this, that he solemnly adopted Ephraim and Manasseh for his own, and engrafted them into his own family. But how, you may ask, is this an illustration of his "faith"? Simply because it proved that Israel believed the promises of God made to him and to his seed, that they should be a great nation, and that in them all the families of the earth should be blessed. He therefore takes the lads out of the family of Joseph and transplants them into his own, in order that they may have their portion with the tribes which were afterwards to constitute the peculiar people of God. Now, had not Jacob possessed the strongest confidence in the promises of God, we may suppose that his

conduct would have been different, and that he would not have desired to rank the children of Joseph amongst his heirs. For consider the position which Joseph held in Egypt at this time. He was second only to Pharaoh. Through all the land of Egypt there was none greater than he, save the King. Power and pomp were his; earthly dignity and advancement lay wholly at his disposal. His children would, no doubt, have inherited the riches and majesty of their father, and might, through Joseph's influence with Pharaoh, have attained to a princely eminence at the Egyptian court. On the other hand, Israel and his seed were but strangers in a strange land: they were looked upon with contempt by the inhabitants of the country, for their occupation had been to feed cattle, and "every shepherd was an abomination unto the Egyptians." Moreover, Jacob knew from the word of God to Abraham that his seed should be evil intreated in Egypt; that they were to be the victims of oppression, outrage, and wrong; that they were to be exposed to the sorest afflictions and distress. Shall the dying man, then, take the lads out of the family in which honour and greatness will be their inheritance,

and transfer them to the stock of his descendants, where their only lot will be suffering, and poverty, and shame? Yes: for Jacob believed God.—believed that his posterity, however for a time ground down and oppressed, should be a peculiar people to the Lord above all nations of the earth,—that "to them should pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God;" and that from them, "according to the flesh," should come the Messiah, who in the fulness of time was to bruise the serpent's head. And therefore the patriarch felt that it was immeasurably more for the honour of Manasseh and Ephraim that they should rank among the suffering people of God, than that they should take their place among the great and noble of the earth. In this therefore his "faith" was shown,—in this was proved its reality. Had it not been "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,"—had he not been thoroughly persuaded of the spiritual privileges to be enjoyed by his descendants, and valued them far above any temporal advantages,—he would have shrunk from adopting the sons of Joseph for his own; he would have left them to the splendour to which

they were born, and not have desired that "his own name and the names of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, might be named upon the lads."

Here was "faith:" faith which looked beyond the present to the future good,—faith which realized the unseen,—faith which, on the simple warrant of God's word, fastened its hope on the glorious things which the Lord had promised. Looking at the dying patriarch's benediction in this light, we see why the apostle Paul should single out of Jacob's life, and record for the instruction of all ages, this one circumstance, that "by faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed, both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

(2) It was not only in the adoption of the sons of Joseph that the faith of the aged Israel was displayed: it is seen conspicuously under another point of view. Mark the terms in which he breathed out the blessing: "God, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk: the God which fed me all my life long unto this day; the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." There can be no question that Jacob, here giving, as he does, the name of God to the angel, alludes to the mysterious Being

with whom, in the form of man, he had wrestled at Peniel "until the breaking of the day." And I would have you observe, that since Jacob speaks of the angel of God, and since he also speaks of this angel as having "redeemed him from all evil," he must have had a knowledge of the truth which in after ages was to be revealed fully and clearly, that redemption was to be wrought out by a Divine Being clothed in the form of man. There was but the one Redeemer from the very earliest ages—"the seed of the woman"—the Christ that was to come; and inasmuch as Jacob recognized the person of God under the human form of the wrestling angel, and inasmuch as he attributed "redemption from all evil" to this mysterious Being, I cannot but think that the blessing bestowed upon the sons of Joseph manifests a strong faith in the "one Mediator between God and men." Believing that God, the angel, had "redeemed him from all evil," he believed all that was made known concerning the Saviour; and in so doing did as firmly rest on Him who was to be "God manifest in the flesh," as did Paul, when he declared more explicitly, that God "sent forth His Son to be a propitiation through faith in His

blood." We can discern in the faith of Jacob the same characteristic elements which distinguish the faith of every real believer. As truly as we see the dying christian of the present day drawing near to his last hour in the "full assurance of faith, so do we find the patriarch Jacob enjoying the same dying assurance,—a faith in the "angel of the covenant"—a faith in a saving Redeemer: looking backward with thankfulness, and forward with hope, while he realizes all the blessedness of the fact, that "the angel of the Lord had redeemed him from all evil." Blessed and beautiful truth!—"from all evil!" Jacob had grievously sinned against God. By craft he had deceived his father; by cruelty defrauded his brother, brought guilt and shame on his conscience in order to obtain the birthright blessing which he desired. But God had mercy on him. In the words of the prophet Hosea it is beautifully said, "God found him at Bethel." On that night when Jacob left his home by stealth, flying from the resentment of his brother, he made his bed on the bare earth, the heavens his canopy, a stone his pillow. A fugitive and a wanderer, he lay down to sleep on his unsheltered couch. But God, who had chosen

him from the womb, hallows his slumbers by a rich vision. The patriarch dreamed: and, behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and decending on it. And then God makes him a promise of blessing, and of His continual presence. And when Jacob rose up from that lonely couch, he had a sense of the Divine presence such as he never had before; he now vividly felt the truth that God was "about his path, and about his bed, and spied out all his ways." Well therefore might he say "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Thus was he found of God. Thus through the loving-kindness of the Lord was he "redeemed from all evil," made "willing in the day of God's power, brought to repentance, cleansed from sin, and sent upon his way in peace."

But Jacob, no doubt, refers to temporal as well as spiritual "evil." In what sense can it be said that "the angel redeemed him from all evil"? for was not his a life of trial, anxiety, and distress? There was hardly a form of sorrow with

which he was not familiar. From the time that his brother's enmity drove him a wanderer from his father's house, to the hour when he breathed out his parting blessing over the head of his twelve sons, he had known affliction in some of its most trying forms. He was deceived by those in whom he trusted; bereaved of those he loved; had to witness domestic feuds, and to go mourning for years over the loss of a favourite son. How, then, had he been "redeemed from all evil"? Because God had brought good out of the "evil;" nay, had turned the evil into good. He gave him no exemption from pain and calamity; but He did what was better, He made the pain and calamity conduce to his advantage. These were the instruments through which he was purified, chastened, and refined. All things worked together for his good. From all real "evil," from the sin that would have separated him from God and destroyed his soul, he was delivered; being kept, through grace, from "making shipwreck of faith." And so, brethren, if you are members of Christ's body, will it be with you. You will not be exempt from pain, sickness, affliction; for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." But however you may be

visited with what the world calls evil, the sorrows which try you will, through the mighty power of God, become real mercies: for how can that be evil which disciplines you for "the inheritance of the saints:" which "works out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"? And poverty, anxiety, disappointment, bereavement, shall be made so conducive to your growth in grace, and to your conformity to Christ, that you, like Jacob, looking from your death-bed on "all the way that the Lord has led you," will be able to say, "the Angel that redeemed me from all evil."

But I must now briefly direct your attention to the latter words of the verse, and show how they complete the proof of the dying Israel's faith. "He worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

St Paul here follows the Septuagint translation; the words in the Hebrew read, "And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head." It is probable that as the aged patriarch "bowed towards the head of the bed," in solemn adoration of God, he did at the same time "lean on his staff" for support. The worship which he at this moment offered devoutly to the God of his

fathers proved the reality of his faith; proved that he thanked the angel of the Covenant for many a mercy received in the past; that he trusted in God still as his Guardian and Redeemer in this the hour of his departure from the body. From that dying bed he looks with calmness to the future; knows that "the grave, the gate of death," will be the portal to immortality; believes that to be "absent from the body" will be to be "present with the Lord,"—Jehovah,—"the Angel which fed him all his life long, and redeemed him from all evil." How, then, can he be anything else than confident? Why need he shrink from going down into that cold river which rolls between him and the heavenly Canaan, seeing that "many waters cannot quench" the faith which burns brightly in his soul, or extinguish the hope which is kindled on the heart's altar, and is "full of immortality"? And is he not moreover, "leaning on the top of his staff"—that staff which, no doubt, is to him a memorial of the loving-kindness of God"? For you will remember that when Jacob was about to meet Esau for the first time after their long separation, he earnestly appealed to God for deliverance from the hand of his brother, and said, "I am

not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for *with my staff* I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." With this "staff" he had left home when fearing the hatred of his brother; with this "staff" he wandered a stranger in a strange land; with this "staff" he had gone through many varied scenes; with this "staff" he returned in prosperity from Padanaram to the land of his fathers; and with this "staff" he had come down from Canaan to the land of Egypt. This "staff" was, therefore, a memorial to him of the providential mercies of the Almighty: of the goodness which had followed him all the days of his life; of the blessings which he had received during the years of his pilgrimage; of the supply of fast-recurring wants,—bread for his hunger and water for his thirst; and of the faithfulness of that God who had said, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into the land of Canaan, for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." The staff was therefore carved as it were, with many a record of the goodness of God: it was a kind of mon-

umental pillar, or Ebenezer, on which was inscribed, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me!" And now when he is about to commend his spirit into the hand of God, he firmly grasps this memorial "staff," and "leans" on it,—not more for the support of his body, than for the support of his soul; and using it as a memento of the past goodness of the Lord, he strengthens himself by a remembrance of the blessings it recalls, for his conflict with the last enemy.

And oh, as I see the patriarch "leaning on the top of his staff," and bowing his head in solemn worship, I cannot but remember the beautiful words of the royal psalmist, who sprang from Jacob's loins; when expressing his trust in the Good Shepherd, he exclaims, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." Oh, for the faith of the patriarch! Oh, for the faith of the psalmist! The one could look back with gratitude, and speak of "the angel who had redeemed him from all evil:" the other could look forward with confidence to the future, and say, even in the prospect of death, "I will fear no evil." It was faith, loving faith, earnest faith,

which wrought in the hearts of both. Yes, it was faith that sustained the aged Israel on his deathbed; faith which upheld him when "the silver cord" was about to be "loosed," and "the golden bowl broken:" faith which numbered up the mercies of God in the past,—which threw a brightness over the approaching future; or, to sum up all in the words of the apostle,—"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."

And now, brethren, what can I more say but this,—"May you and I, like Jacob, die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like his!" The time is coming when we must engage in the conflict with the last enemy; for "there is no discharge in that war:" the grave is "the house appointed for all living." And how shall we overcome? How shall we be made "more than conquerors"? Through "faith:" through "faith" in "the angel who has redeemed us from all evil;" whose blood cleanses from the guilt of sin, and whose Spirit saves from its power: the Angel who has taken from death its sting, and robbed the grave of its victory. Thus, and thus alone can you and I, or anyone, be calm

and serene in that trying hour. Doubt and darkness must throw around you their dreary shadows, if you have not "a good hope through grace." I know nothing that can minister peace to you in the dying hour, but the persuasion that the Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms. Having this assurance, you may confidently enter "the valley of the shadow of death," because "the Good Shepherd" will be with you: "His rod and His staff, they shall comfort you;" and you shall have "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom of glory.

And, my brother, when the death hour shall come, and you are about to breathe out your soul into the hands of God who gave it, forget not to bring with you to the death-bed the "staff" for your support. Take there the "staff" on which memory has inscribed God's goodness for the past; how He has "fed you," and supplied all your wants, temporal and spiritual, and "delivered you from all evil;" and then you will have confidence in God's promises for the future. Let your feeling be that of David's: "Because Thou hast been my help, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." "Thou hast been my help"—there is the "staff;" "under the shadow

of Thy wings will I rejoice"—there is the confidence of hope. Ah, our memory should be a "staff" on which we daily engrave the record of some mercy received,—some danger escaped,—some evil averted,—some blessing secured! And these mercies vouchsafed should lead us to look for mercies to come. Promises fulfilled should lead us to a firmer reliance on God's word; for he who *has* "tasted that the Lord is gracious,"—who has found that God has never disappointed him,—who knows that no one thing has ever failed which the Lord has said,—may safely pass through life with hope, may meet death with calmness, assured that nothing shall ever be "able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

X.

The Faith of Joseph on his Death-bed.

"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."—HEBREWS xi. 22.

THE history of Joseph, like that of his father Jacob, was more than commonly eventful. It is full of the deepest interest, dramatic, pathetic: replete with strange and stirring incidents. As a pastoral poem its beauty is unmatched; as an inspired narrative its instruction is priceless.

Out of many acts in a life full of moving interest, St. Paul selects the one just read as a proof that Joseph's faith was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He passes by in silence his early history: his afflictions, his patience in adversity, his humility in prosperity, his wisdom, his fore-

thought, his brotherly affection, his filial love, and fixes our attention on this one incident of his adventurous life. "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Here are two illustrations of faith: (1) he "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel;" (2) he "gave commandment concerning his bones." Looking at these evidences separately we shall see how in both instances Joseph's faith was conspicuous.

In dealing with the earlier illustration, let me draw your attention to the history to which the Apostle alludes. In the fiftieth chapter of Genesis we find a brief record of Joseph's death. He gathers his brethren round him, and expresses his last wishes in words which show that his heart had never been in Egypt, with all its honours. "I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old:

and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." The dying patriarch dwells on "the departing of the children of Israel," and on God's promise of the land of Canaan, and speaks of it as the hope and inheritance of His people. He, too, claims his share in that country; and though he was second only to Pharaoh at the court of Egypt,—though men bowed the knee before him, and he was ruler over all the land,—though his wife was an Egyptian woman, and his children born in the country,—yet is his heart far away: he is but an alien in Egypt, and Canaan is his home. In the midst of all that could attach his affections to Egypt, surrounded by glory, and riches, and power, he kept his faith firm in the promises of God, and confessed that, like his fathers who dwelt in tabernacles, he too had no continuing city, but sought one to come. Had he been indifferent to the hope of the promised land, had he not believed God's words respecting the future of his brethren, he would have had them make their permanent residence in the land where they were so prosperous, and think no more of Canaan with its uncertainties and distant blessings. Goshen was now theirs, with its fair and fertile plains, where

they would have full scope for the promptings of ambition, and a wide stage for the attainment of worldly advantage. But Joseph "walked by faith, not by sight." His "eyes saw the King in his beauty, and the land that was afar off," and the glories of Egypt paled before the vision. He therefore not only set his own affections on the things that are unseen and eternal, but directed the hearts and hopes of his brethren from the ease and luxuries of Egypt to the better joys and purer delights of the land of promise. As we see the dying patriarch full of faith and hope, his heart in the better country which gleamed brightly through the mists of the present, withdrawing the thoughts of his brethren from Egypt and fastening them on the future, believing God's promise, and regarding its fulfilment as sure,—we cannot but assent to the Apostle's statement: "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel."

Brethren, let us pause here to ask, Does the unseen rule our lives? Does our faith so grasp the promises of God, that our desires flow towards the things that are unseen and eternal? Is the tent life natural to us, because

we not only confess but believe that "here we have no continuing city, but look for one to come"? In such a life there need be nothing of the recluse or the ascetic,—nothing to interfere with our daily work, or with the enjoyments which God has so liberally given unto us. Joseph served Pharaoh well and faithfully. He did not neglect the duties of his high office. The cares of a kingdom were upon him, and he did not shrink from the burden, or seek to shift them to other shoulders; but he administered the affairs of state with strict and conscientions fidelity. He was all the better servant to Pharaoh because he was a good servant of God. He let the light of the future shine in on the present, and sanctified the common work of life by doing everything "heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." So may it be with us. There is no need to withdraw from active life when we give ourselves to God and begin to live for the future; we can serve Christ in the station to which we have been called; "and whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do," may "do all to the glory of God." Let us ever remember this. Let us not run away from the work that lies before us in the

world; but prove by our spirit and conduct that "though *in* the world, we are not *of* it." Whilst our faith raises us above the present, and impels us to separation from all that is evil, let it also constrain us to "do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do;" that so others may see that our work here is all the better performed because it is done as unto our Great Master in Heaven. Such was the faith that ruled the life of Joseph in Egypt,—a faith which shone out clearly amidst the mists of death; for "by faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones."

Look now at the second feature in Joseph's faith: "He gave commandment concerning his bones."

When he lay dying he took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." They carefully fulfilled his wishes. They embalmed him, and put him into a mummy case, and placed him in a coffin in Egypt. Thus they kept his body amongst them from generation to generation, through the centuries,—all through the time of their oppression

under the Pharaohs, until the day when God brought them out by a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. And during all those years that dead body was a silent witness to the coming fulfilment of the Divine promise, that they should be delivered from bondage, and brought into the land flowing with milk and honey. "God shall surely visit you: carry my bones up hence."

This solemn dying command of Joseph is referred to more than once in the sacred writings. When the children of Israel had been delivered from the house of bondage, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (Exodus xiii. 19); "for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you." We read in the book of Joshua (xxiv. 32) that, "the bones of Joseph which the children brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." So that at length the body of Joseph found a resting-place in the blessed soil where he desired it to

be laid. Thus faith had its reward. He was buried, not in an alien country, amongst strangers; but rested in the country which the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, had sworn to give to their seed for ever. And how was this "commandment concerning his bones," a proof that Joseph lived by faith? It proved that he trusted in the promises of God: in the deliverance of His people from the bondage of Egypt, and their introduction to a better country. With a belief of the future inheritance burning in his heart, he yet desired not that his dead body should be carried at once to Canaan, as Jacob's was; but that it should remain in the camp of his people in order to remind them from year to year that Egypt was not their home: that there could be no rest till they had entered the land promised by God to their fathers. And may not Joseph's care for the body,—his desire that it should be buried in the sacred soil where the promised seed should be born,—have expressed his belief in its becoming a partaker in the glories of redemption? It is difficult to say what amount of knowledge these early fathers had of a future state, and of a resurrection from the dead. But I firmly believe

that "they did not look simply for transitory promises,"—that their hope was not bounded by the horizon of time; for once and again in the inspired writings the eternal inheritance is spoken of as the object of their desire. St. Paul tells us that Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He says, moreover, of all who, like "the father of the faithful," confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth,—that they "desired a better country, that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." Holy Job, who was contemporary with these patriarchs, expressed his hope with a clearness not to be surpassed by us who live in the full sunlight of Gospel revelation. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Christ Himself assures us that not only life after death, but the resurrection of the body was revealed at least indirectly in the early days, through the covenant relation which God held towards the chosen people. He gives in proof

of this the fact that God calls Himself "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead. "Now that the dead are raised," said our Lord, "even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him." And His reasoning seems to have this bearing,—all the holy men of old are alive in the deep bosom of God, awaiting the resurrection: for as all the covenant promises were made to them whilst they were in the flesh, so must they rise in the flesh to receive their fulfilment. The grave cannot hold them for ever; they must, as God is true, come forth and enjoy the city which He has prepared for their everlasting habitation.

And so the hope of these faithful men of old was the same as ours. They were partakers with us of the like precious faith. Different as are the circumstances in which we live, different as is the measure of our knowledge; all minor distinctions are lost in the one great fact that we trust in the same God, believe in the same Redeemer, and look forward to the same

"inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [all] who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." The same hope of a home better than the present burns in the heart of every dying believer, as it burned in the heart of Joseph, when, "by faith," just before he died, "he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones."

I remark once more, that the solicitude exhibited by Joseph in regard to his sepulchre,—his unwillingness to be buried in Egypt,—his desire to be buried in Canaan,—gave token of his belief in the worth of the body. The body has been redeemed as well as the soul, purchased by "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The body is therefore sacred, and must be reverently dealt with; not from mere sentiment or fancy, but rather because of faith. The religion of revelation ennobles the whole man. It is the only religion that does so. Other systems have a very low idea of the body, and profess that the highest attainment of the sage is to do violence to its natural affections, and to deny all its

affections and desires. To get rid of the body, to escape from the tabernacle of flesh, to emancipate the spirit from its prison, was in their eyes the loftiest condition to which a human being can attain. On the other hand, infidelity would pamper the body and indulge its appetites, and gratify its every desire,—its language this: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" and "death is an everlasting sleep;" "the grave an eternal home." Faith says, "the body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body:" Christ has redeemed it; therefore "present it a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" and though it should return to the earth as it was, it shall be raised up again through the power of Him who is "the resurrection and the life."

Yes, brethren, the body of the humblest saint is sacred, and venerable in the eye of faith. For frail, infirm, shattered though it be,—clothed with rags, and covered with sores,—it is the shrine of the indwelling Spirit, is consecrated by His presence, dedicated to His honour, and shall, in the day when Christ returns to claim His own, be clothed upon with immotality and glory. Therefore that which Christ has redeemed, and

the Holy Ghost inhabits, that which is reserved for a splendid transformation, it becomes us not to despise or to treat with disrespect. True, over the body shall be said the solemn words: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;" true, it shall have to say to corruption, "Thou art my mother;" and to the worm, "Thou art my sister;" but nevertheless it is appointed to a glorious destiny. The corruptible shall yet put on incorruption, and the mortal shall yet assume immortality. And this may have been Joseph's feeling when he "gave commandment concerning his bones." He would not be buried in a strange land, where he would have to make his grave with the wicked; he would rather be laid in the country which had been covenanted to his fathers, and where all the faithful were to lie, and where he might rise with those who were sharers with him of a common hope and partakers of a common faith. Visions of the resurrection may have floated across his dying eyes; thoughts of life and immortality, not yet fully brought to light, may have filled his yearning heart; and his great desire was to rest side by side with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the land which was their home, and

whence they were all to rise to the life eternal. And so on his death-bed, he "took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

Brethren, may our faith, when we lie a-dying, be as strong and as vivid as that of Joseph on his death-bed! And may we not only resemble him in his death, but in his life. Indeed, it is only by living a life such as his, that we can be prepared for a death such as his. May we manifest the same personal purity, the same spotless and stainless integrity, the same unresisting and uncomplaining endurance under wrong, the same meekness and gentleness, the same wisdom, and courage, and faith. May we make it "Christ to live," and then we shall "find it gain to die!" Then whether we live or die, we shall be the Lord's. If we are "alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," then we shall never die, but be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." If we die, then in falling asleep we shall look for the promise of His coming; and amongst the souls of "just men

made perfect" shall await the time when the Lord Jesus Christ "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." Then all shall be well. All His saints shall be with the Lord. They shall be called from the graves, where their bodies were laid in faith, into the land which God has given them for an everlasting inheritance, even the land where "their sun shall no more go down, neither shall their moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended."

XI.

The Faith of the Parents of Moses.

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the King's commandment."—HEBREWS xi. 23.

IT is an instance of *parental* faith to which the Apostle here draws our attention. The children of Israel during their sojourn in Egypt multiplied so rapidly that their increase roused the jealousy of Pharaoh. Years had elapsed, and the important services rendered by Joseph were forgotten. Another King was now upon the throne, and his reign was signalized by the oppression and persecution of the Hebrews. He observed with suspicion and dislike the growing strength of the alien nation, who spoke a strange language, lived under a polity of their own, and worshipped one God. Afraid of this people who were growing so great in his midst, he resolved,

by the exercise of severe restraints, to bring them into complete subjection. "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." This, however, did not diminish their numbers. "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." This marvellous increase in spite of oppression only heightened the dread of the Egyptians, so that they increased their severity; and "they made the children of Israel to serve with rigour, making their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour." But even these cruel measures did not satisfy the reigning Pharaoh. He issued an edict, about sixty-two years after the death of Joseph, that the male children of the Hebrews should be destroyed at once upon their birth; and he charged all his people to cast into the river every son that was born to the hated nation, the daughters only being saved alive. It was at this time that Moses was born. When the oppression of Pharaoh was at its height, and the children of Israel might have been sunk

into despair, thinking that God had shut up His loving kindness in anger and had forgotten to be gracious,—then did the Lord raise up a deliverer. The circumstances which surrounded his birth were those of extreme peril. Would his parents, in face of the King's wrath, and with officers planted round the Hebrew dwellings to see that his commands were carried out, be able to save their child? Would they dare to run counter to the King's will, even for the rescue of their son? They did what they could for their child's life, not fearing Pharaoh's commandment. And in this they were influenced not only by natural affection, but by another principle. No doubt parental love had much to do in their desire to protect their child, and that it helped them to rise superior to fear; for "love is strong as death: many waters cannot quench it." This is seen even in the inferior animals. The bear, to save her cubs from the hunter's spear, will offer her own shaggy breast to the blow. The human mother would gladly risk her own life, if by so doing she might save her child's. A mother has been known to stand on the side of the sinking ship, with her child in her arms, watching the passing of the life-

boat,—not that she may leap in herself (for both there is no room), but that she may throw in her boy, while she remains herself to die.

But there was more than natural affection in the wish of Amram and Jochebed to preserve their child's life. Faith combined with parental love. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents." But what had "faith" to lay hold on in the case of *this* child more than in the case of others? Had there been any revelation given to his parents which led them to act as they did? We find no traces of any such special intimation of God's will. We have, however one special reason assigned for the anxiety of Amram and Jochebed to save their boy from death. "When his mother saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months."

Stephen, in his defence before the Jewish Sanhedrim, gives a similar account of this matter. "But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another King arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out

their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months." It was the beauty of this child: his exceeding fairness,—his fairness to God, or his being "fair to God," for that is the signification of the expression,—which more especially stimulated his parents' faith. Some suppose the beauty of the child to have been supernatural, as an indication of what was in reserve for him. Josephus describes him as "divine in form:" and the Roman historian Justian also speaks of his extraordinary beauty. There were promises too, which might have encouraged the parents to risk their own lives in the attempt to secure the life of their child, and to rise above the fear of the King's commandment. God had declared to Abraham that his seed should be strangers in a strange land, and that they should serve a foreign nation, which should afflict them for four hundred years. But though they were to be holden in bondage so long, the yoke was at length to be broken. "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." The children of

Israel were not to perish in Egypt, but were to escape from those who were now making them serve with rigour. The promise made to Abraham had been renewed to Jacob, when he was going down with his family into Egypt. "I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation; I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again." So that, as God Himself had set a fixed period for Israel's servitude, as His promise intimated that the nation was not to be exterminated or reduced to hopeless bondage,—the parents of Moses may have believed, counting up the years of the captivity, that "the time to favour Israel, even the set time, was come." They knew that if all the infant sons were to be destroyed, according to the edict of Pharaoh, the nation must soon perish; and therefore, as God worketh by means, they took every precaution in their power to preserve their own child's life. And so believing the promises made to their fathers, and resting in the love of a covenant-keeping God, "when Moses was born, they hid him three months, because they saw that he was a proper child; and

they were not afraid of the King's commandment."

The time came, however, when the child could no longer be concealed. What were his parents to do now? Whither were they to turn? His mother, confiding still in the gracious protection of God, "made an ark of bulrushes, daubed it with slime, and pitch, and putting the child therein, laid it in the flags by the river's brink." It is said that the construction of the little ark of bulrushes, and its being covered with asphalt and pitch, perfectly accords with the antiquities of Egypt. The papyrus, though it has now disappeared, was then very common in those parts; the reeds which grew to a height of ten feet were used for light boats, the papyrus leaf itself for sails. Asphalt and pitch, which the mother used for closing the small boat or basket against the water, were two of the chief ingredients for embalming the dead. So Jochebed, resting in God's care, consigned her babe to the frail ark amidst the rushes on the banks of the river. Humanly speaking, she was trusting to a forlorn hope; for might not her boy become a prey to the fierce and savage crocodile? or might not the child's hiding-place be discovered

by one of the Egyptians, who would only be too well pleased to carry out the King's command, and put it to instant death? Or, supposing both these perils were escaped, how was the little life to be preserved,—how was it to be cared for, and fed? Still, God was great, and God was good. He had wrought wonders for their fathers in the days of old: He was able to work the same wonders for them; and, relying on His gracious providence, they committed the child to the waters of the river Nile. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the King's commandment."

Let us now look at faith's reward. When she had placed him in his frail cradle, the mother, feeling that she had done what she could,—perhaps unable to bear the sight of her child's exposure, returned home no doubt to pray. The sister lingered behind to watch the brother's fate. That fate, to all human appearance, was soon decided; the Egyptian Princess, the daughter of Israel's enemy and destroyer, came down, after the simplicity of the age, to bathe in the sacred river. Her maidens followed her.

She saw the basket among the flags, and sent one of her attendants to fetch it. When she had opened it, "behold, the baby wept." The cry of the child moved the Princess to compassion. She said, in her pity for its outcast condition, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." What a remarkable providence of God! The only person in all the kingdom of Egypt who could have thrown the shield of protection round the child, and who would have ventured to do so, was led to the spot where the young child lay in its ark of rushes. The surpassing beauty of the boy, its tears, its piteous condition, went to her heart, and she determined to rear the foundling as her own. The parents had believed God, fearing Him rather than man; and their faith is honoured by an abundant recompense of reward.

But was there not danger of another kind in his rescue by the Egyptian Princess, and from her determination to adopt him as her son? What shall we say of the idolatry of the heathen court, of its temptations to luxury and wealth, and forgetfulness of God? Did not these threaten even a greater peril to the boy than the waters of the Nile and the cruelty

of the enemy? But God interfered to save the child from such formidable dangers; and he was given to his own mother to be nursed, and trained in the fear of the Lord. His sister was at hand to recommend a Hebrew nurse; and being sent by the Princess to fetch one, she returned with the child's mother; and Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses (that is drawn out): "because," said she, "I drew him out of the water." Here again we see the overruling Providence of God. The child was to be taught from his earliest years the elements of divine truth; to look upon God as his God, and to regard the people of God as his people; he was to have such principles instilled, and such a foundation laid of all that was good, and true, and lovely, and of good report, as no future temptation or trial should be able to eradicate or destroy. He was to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: in unswerving allegiance to the God of Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob; to be deeply imbued with the sentiment that Egypt was not his home; and he was to expect as his inheritance the land promised to his forefathers, the land flowing with milk and honey. Such was the religious training that his mother would supply, and which would keep him by God's grace safe amidst the corruptions and blandishments of Egypt.

Again, we see God's providence in his training for the great work that lay before him as the appointed deliverer, and leader, and lawgiver of Israel. Had he remained in his father's house, he could have had no opportunity of being fitted for the noble part he was to play on the world's stage. But living at the court of Pharaoh, and brought up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he became "learned," as we might have expected, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and in deeds. He had all the advantages of an education in the court of the most advanced nation of the world. Thus was he prepared for the extraordinary services to which he was afterwards called, for being the deliverer, the legislator, the leader, and counsellor, of the chosen people. The faith of

his parents, who feared God more than man, was thus remarkably rewarded: and their son through the Divine Providence, received just the training which he required for the noble position he was designed to fill.

Brethren, do we not learn from this history what a blessing comes to the child through the faith of the parent? It is not that the faith of the father or mother is made a substitute for the faith of the child; this cannot be: no man can thus be saved by proxy. But the uniform truth of Scripture is this,—that a parent's faith is a means of procuring spiritual blessings for the child. Indeed, all intercessory prayer, all religious education, all godly training, is founded on the principle, that the faith of one, while it cannot be a substitute for the faith of another, may be the means through which the richest spiritual blessings shall flow to the other. When the jailer at Philippi was converted, not only himself but all his house were baptized, and so brought into outward covenant with God. It was the force of this consideration that drew from St. Paul the remarkable words: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the

husband; else were your children unclean; but now they are holy." Holy? In what sense? Not absolutely in themselves, but relatively, through relationship with the believing parents. And just as it is plain from the Word of God that children suffer for their parents' sins,—that "the fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,"—so is it also evident from the same Word that the faith of godly parents secures a blessing to their little ones. We know, indeed, from instances but too familiar, that the recklessness of the father will bring poverty on the child. We have seen how the vices of the parents have transmitted diseases to their descendants. We have observed frequently how the evil counsels and bad example of an ungodly home have led to the degradation and ruin of the family, and been a curse to them: but we have also known cases where faith, and holy training, and pious example have been blessed in a marked manner by Him who has said, "Them that honour Me I will honour." True it is that grace is not hereditary; that the sons of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Our Lord warned the Jews against the folly of

relying on their parentage, saying within themselve, "We have Abraham for our father."

Many a pious parent has to mourn over a godless child. Witness David pacing up and down his lonely chamber, and wringing his hands as he utters the piteous cry: O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! But notwithstanding these sad exceptions, God tells us that He blesses a parent's faith, and a parent's training. The attempt to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is graciously owned of Him. There is great encouragement in the command and promise: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." In all our efforts to teach, to warn, to win,—in all our endeavours to lead our children to Christ, we are running in the very line of God's loving will towards them; for He who took up little children in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them,—He who knew the heart of God—has told us, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." And He has said to every one of us, "Suffer the little children to come

unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

One other lesson we learn from the subject before us. God's protecting care over the infant Moses, and His providential dealings with him in childhood, are pledges to us of the safety and security of the Church chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world. As God watched over His people Israel, and in their direst extremity raised up a deliverer who should emancipate and lead them after their Exodus to the borders of the promised land; so does He overrule the fortunes, guard the welfare, and guide the way of the people loved with an everlasting love, and in the fulness of time drawn with loving kindness to His arms. Thanks be to God that the Lord reigneth, and shall reign, until His enemies—who are also the enemies of His Church—shall be put under His feet. We need have no fear for the true Church of Christ, which is "His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." There is no need to sit, like the aged Eli, trembling for the ark of God, as if it had gone down to some doubtful battle. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church. Men and devils may conspire to defeat the purpose

of God in its salvation; but they might as well attempt to bring down the arch of yonder skies in ruins, as to imagine that they can turn aside the purposes of that God who doeth according to His will, in the armies of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Well may we ask, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The Kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet"—whatever the combination of the ungodly may be—"yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Happy are they who are fighting on the side of Christ, and who, taking to themselves the whole armour of God, march to victory under the banner of "the Great Captain of their salvation." They, are on the winning side. They go forth conquering and to conquer. Hard may be the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil; sharp the warfare against the "principalities,

and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places;" but they that draw the sword on earth shall wave the palm in heaven; they that war in armour here shall walk in the fine linen clean and white hereafter. Soon shall the warfare be over, the battle terminate, the voice of the Great Captain call His soldiers from the hard-fought field; and as He places on their brow the crown of life, His words shall ring with immortal gladness in their ears: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XII.

The Choice of Moses.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."—HEBREWS xi. 24, 25, 26.

WE have seen the faith of Moses' Parents: we are now to contemplate the faith of Moses himself. The text places before us *two thoughts* connected therewith.

We have (1) the choice of Moses; and (2) the principles by which he was guided to make such a choice. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the

treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

The *first* aspect under which the choice of Moses is presented to us is that of voluntary renunciation of earthly rank and honour. His adoption into the royal family of Egypt opened up for him brilliant prospects of worldly distinction, and placed before his eyes a splendid and dazzling career. There is a tradition that the Pharaoh who reigned in Egypt at this time had no child but this only daughter, whose name was Thermutes, and that he gave her permission to adopt Moses for her son, and to institute him into the privileges of heirship. On this account she gave him a name, as was usual in cases of adoption; and since the incident of his preservation suggested an appropriate title, she called him Moses, for she said, "Because I drew him out of the water." Being thus acknowledged as the heir presumptive to a throne, Moses was surrounded by all that could make his position desirable: princely rank,—the pleasures of a magnificent and seductive court. But Moses had been taught by the lips of that mother who nursed him, and who had instilled into his infant mind lessons of love and loyalty

to God, the comparative value of this world and the next; and he had learned to prefer above all earthly glory "the recompence of God's reward." He had learned, also, that God's cause could not be served by dishonourable concealment, and that He would not bless carnal policy for the accomplishment of His designs. He resolved, therefore, not to hide his obscure and lowly parentage. He would renounce his reputed connection with the royal family of Egypt. His course was decided. He boldly avowed himself a child of that despised race which was held in contempt by the Egyptians; and "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." This step was indeed a death-blow to all hope of worldly advancement; but he did not hesitate to take it. His resolution was made, not in the days of intemperate youth, not under the impulse of excitement and enthusiasm, but "when he was come to years." It was the fruit, therefore, of the solid judgment and calm deliberation of the matured man. He walked, perhaps, in darkness, and had no light; but he walked boldly on. He stayed himself on God. It was enough that his path was plain. He gave up

the honours of the court as readily as he afterwards strode into the King's palace to demand the release of the Hebrews, and to beard that lion in his den.

What a pattern to us, when, though the way be dark, the duty is clear! A most noble example of what a man can dare and a man can do, whose faith is fixed on God!

The *second* aspect of Moses' choice is, his preference of "suffering with the people of God" to "the pleasures of sin for a season." He not only made an avowal of his connection with the Hebrews, but he showed his sympathy with their sorrows by a readiness to share their fallen fortunes, and to stoop beneath the same afflicting yoke that bowed down the neck of his people. For the Israelites were then Pharaoh's bondmen. Their lives were made bitter by the most rigorous and galling servitude, and they had their full share of that contempt and ignominy which are inseparable from the lot of the slave.

The active sympathy which Moses felt for his people soon involved him in a quarrel which led to the most serious consequences. On one occasion when he had gone out to look on the

burdens of his brethren, he interfered to avenge the wrongs of a Hebrew, and in the course of the strife he took away the life of the oppressor. This deed was soon noised abroad, and having reached the ears of the jealous King of Egypt, it became needful that Moses should quit the court and flee to the land of Midian. So he left the splendour of a palace for the lowly occupation of a herdsman. And why? Because the choice must now be made between Egypt and God,—between "the pleasures of sin," and the privileges of the chosen people. And he "halted not between two opinions." His mind was made up: his decision was taken. He descended, by one step, from honour and station to poverty and abasement. And he was right. Oh, brethren, better to "suffer affliction," sorrow, exile, "with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God," says David, "than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Brethren, such words may be easily said, or readily assented to, but do we really believe what we say? Could we, in similar circumstances, make the same choice as Moses? Suppose you had wealth, and rank,

and station; suppose you had every enjoyment within your reach that the heart can desire, but these in some shape or other connected with sin,—could you, for conscience' sake, renounce them all—the pomps and vanities of this wicked world—and submit to a lot of poverty, and a life of toil? Contrasting "the pleasures of sin" with the sufferings of God's people, could you make the choice of Moses, and renounce those pleasures for the yoke and burden of Christ? Are you doing so? Redeemed, by Christ's blood, do you acknowledge that you are not your own, but bought with a price, and bound to "glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's"? Is it the language of your heart with reference to Christ, "Where Thou goest I will go, and where Thou lodgest I will lodge; Thy people shall be my people, and Thy God my God"?

What an impressive phrase—"the pleasures of sin for a season!" They pass; they fade; they perish in the using. Even while they are enjoyed they vanish. And how often do they leave behind them pain, and bitterness, and shame, and remorse! There is a sting in them all. They are like apples of Sodom, fair to

look upon, but turning to dust and ashes in the mouth. In very truth "the way of transgressors is hard." Nor does this truth apply more to the grosser "pleasures of sin" than to what are supposed to be the harmless enjoyments of the world,—its follies and fashions, its gaieties and frivolities, which make up the life of so many, to the neglect of God and of the soul. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." The pomp, the pageant, the pride, the keen delight, the feverish enjoyment,—they are all passing even whilst they seem to be ours; like as when you watch the evening lights upon the hills,—some changing tints of rose, or purple, or gold; a few quivering rays of beauty,—then all is gone. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." And our afflictions with the people of God,—they pass too. The sorrow and the suffering go, but they leave blessed results behind. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed

in us." "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Those shining ones yonder, whose eyes have no tears, and whose voices are tuned to the new song: who are they? What are they? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." May God give us wisdom not to "spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not!" Ours be the "choice" rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season!"

But a *third* feature in the choice of Moses was this: "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

Is it not strange to read of "Christ" in a record of days so distant, and to find that a servant of God, exposed to persecution at a period when as yet God was not manifest in flesh, could be said to "*bear His reproach*"? With what justice can it be affirmed that Moses was "reproached" for, or on account of Christ? How can it hold good, that hatred to Christ animated his persecutors? Well, brethren, ever

since the fall there has been going forward upon this earth a ceaseless conflict between evil and good. So soon as that old serpent the devil heard that "the seed of the woman should bruise his head,—that a Deliverer should arise who should reconcile the world unto God,—he directed the whole of his strength and intelligence against God's purpose and plan for restoring the fallen. He had accomplished the ruin of this creation; and all that now remained was to prevent its restoration. When he beheld, therefore, the selection of a chosen family, and was aware of the transmission of the promise from Abraham to his children, he knew at once that if he would prevent the rise of the promised Deliverer, he must do so through the nation from whom He was to spring. Accordingly he spared no pains to destroy this favoured people: to bring about such a state of rebellion on their part that God might be provoked to abandon His gracious purpose. And whether his malice was shown in exciting Kings to oppress, or moving the nation itself to sin, the object of his malice was the promised "seed of the woman;" and the blow was intended for Christ when it descended upon those "of whom

as concerning the flesh Christ was to come." Christ was persecuted in the persecutions of His people. "The reproaches" which fell upon Moses were virtually designed and directed against Christ: Christ was the real object of the devil's hostility; and Moses was assailed only because he served as an instrument in God's hand for preparing Christ's way. So that if Moses had turned away from the path of duty,—consulting present ease and self-indulgence,—it would have been literally "the reproach of Christ" which he declined; whilst on the other hand, gladly embracing it as a privilege, it was literally "the reproach of Christ" which he esteemed "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

Brethren, "the reproach of Christ" has not ceased. Enmity is still awakened in the world by a faithful adherence to Christ's cause. The christian who, refusing to conform to certain worldly practices because he condemns them, or because he is in doubt of their lawfulness, is denounced on that account as over-precise and puritanical,—bears "the reproach of Christ." The man who, boldly declaring himself on the side of God, provokes ridicule and scorn,—who,

avouching openly the doctrines of the cross, incurs the contempt of those who deem themselves wise in their generation; he who, throwing heart and soul into religion, is despised as an enthusiast, or jeered at as a "saint,"—such a man bears "the reproach of Christ." Brethren, let us not be "ashamed of Christ and His words," or shrink from an open avowal of His name; but "confessing Him before men," be willing, "as good soldiers" of the cross, to "endure hardship" for His sake. Let us keep in mind the words of the apostle: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." Like Moses, let us esteem the reproach of Christ" not only a thing to be patiently endured, but let us "esteem it greater riches than the treasures" of the world.

Notice *the principles* which enabled Moses to make the choice referred to.

"By faith," the apostle tells us, Moses was influenced and moved. Now in order to his exercising this "faith" it is clear that Moses must have had a knowledge of the one true

God, and of His purpose of mercy toward the world. And whence could he have obtained that knowledge? Not by the exercise of his natural faculties,—for man by his own wisdom never did know, never can know God. Not in the idolatrous court of Pharaoh. Whence then? No doubt from that pious mother who in the providence of God became the nurse of her own child. She laid the foundation of religious truth in his mind; she instructed him in the doctrines of her faith; she fortified his heart with holy principles; she instilled into the soul of the boy such reverence and loyalty to God, that neither the honours of royalty, nor the pleasures of wealth, nor the seductions of a court, nor the reproach of the cross, could ever afterwards move him from his purpose. Here is a thought which should touch to the quick the heart of every parent, and especially of every mother among you,—teaching you how important to "train up" from the first "your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The mother of Moses, by precept, example, and prayer, so moulded the mind of her son, under the blessing of God, that "when he came to years, he refused to be called the

son of Pharaoh's daughter; and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It was "by faith," coming as a gift from God, through the channel of his mother's teaching, that Moses learned to endure hardness, to spurn "the pleasures of sin:" to choose adversity; to welcome reproach; to count religion's *worst* better than the world's *best;* and, lightly esteeming the treasures of Egypt to "have respect unto the recompence of the reward."

And, brethren, see the importance of "faith." It is "faith" that makes all the difference between the natural and the spiritual man. The vision of the natural man is bounded by the horizon of time, hedged in by the present world, confined to the objects of sense, and therefore with him the present is all-important, the future shadowy and vague. The vision of the spiritual man grasps the things that are unseen; piercing the clouds, it sees the glory of heaven and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; it beholds a fair land stretching beyond the boundaries of the grave; and apprehending the truth that "the things which are seen are temporal" while "the things which are not seen

are eternal,"—it lives for eternity, for heaven, and for God.

And so the faith of Moses had respect unto "the recompence of the reward." He turned away from the seductions of sin, and willingly encountered reproach and afflictions; for he considered that "the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that should be revealed in him." And amply was his faith rewarded. To him it was given to be the leader and lawgiver of the chosen nation; to set in order God's holy worship; to speak with Jehovah, face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend; to be the mediator between God and Israel, and thus to be one of the most eminent types of the promised Messiah. Nor was this all. To see the whole reward of faith, we must follow him into the world to come. There are two intimations concerning him in the New Testament Scriptures. He appeared in glory with Elias, and they talked with Jesus when He was transfigured on the mount. And, in the Apocalypse, the victors over the beast who "stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the

song of the Lamb." We may judge from these notices the nearness of Moses to the Saviour, and the place which he occupies in the heavenly world. For surely it is not a light thing that "the harps of God" should be tuned to sing his song, and that his name should be written beside that of "the only-begotten of the Father." And thus he who willingly bore "the reproach of Christ" did obtain, and is enjoying now,—yea, and shall enjoy for ever,—the expected "recompence of reward."

One word only in conclusion.

Think you that Moses now repents of his choice? Does he regret having given up "the treasures of Egypt?" Does he mourn over the lost dignity of being called "the son of Pharaoh's daughter"? Is he grieved that he cast in his lot with the suffering people of God? Is he a loser by any or by all of the earthly sacrifices which he made? You one and all answer, "No!" Your conscience, your reason, your judgment, approve of Moses' choice. Then make that choice your own. Determine, by the help of God, to "count all things loss that you may win Christ." "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Ere you gratify that violent passion, ere you yield to that strong ambition, ere you tell that profitable lie, ere you indulge in those "pleasures of sin,"—look well, I pray you, into the depths of the eternity which is before you, and ask yourselves the question: "What shall it profit?" "What shall it profit" you, if you should "gain," not "the whole world," but something which you will fling to the winds five minutes after gaining it? We do not escape the tremendous issue because our temptations respect trivial objects. A soul may be lost by giving way to some gigantic sin; a soul may also be sacrificed by the paltry dishonesty or the petty fraud. Oh, "what shall it profit" when all that is here is fading from your dying eye, and the realities of the eternal world are opening before you,—"what shall it profit" you if you have gained wealth, reputation, power, while thou thyself art lost? Would that I could place before you the full value of the soul! Look at Jesus Christ hanging on the atoning tree,—His head crowned with thorns, His eye dimmed with anguish, His body pierced with wounds, as He offers to God a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; here

learn the true value of the human soul, and what it cost to redeem it. And forget not the lessons of duty that the awful sight is calculated to teach. Brethren, there are things in heaven and hell more enduring than the things of time and sense. Let us make our choice, and take our measures for eternity. "Whether we live, let us live unto the Lord; or whether we die, let us die unto the Lord; so shall we have "a recompence of reward,"—even "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

XIII.

Moses Forsaking Egypt.

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.—HEBREWS xi. 27.

WE see here faith in its results, and are taught that it makes its possessor strong to do, and mighty to suffer in the cause of God. It doth indeed lift the Christian above the fear of man's power, and makes him comparatively indifferent to man's praise. It sends him on his way calm and undisturbed "through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report," and puts into his mouth the bold and courageous words: "None of these things move me." And so, "by faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

There were two occasions on which Moses

forsook Egypt. When he had come to man's estate, and was still "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," he went out with a heart in sympathy with his suffering brethren, to look upon their burdens. He was a nobler man than any of the luxurious courtiers in the palace of the Ptolemies. He knows the glorious promises that had been made to his people, and the God under whose care they were,—the living God, the one true God, who was able to make them "more than conquerors" over every foe. The gods of Egypt—what were they? Hideous deities: forms of animal existence: birds, beasts, reptiles,—every creature, however low and loathsome, that moved upon the face of the earth. He knows this, and so he prefers to take part with his enslaved countrymen rather than enjoy the sensual pleasures of the splendid but idolatrous city of the Pharaohs. As he goes out to look upon the burdens of his brethren, he sees an Egyptian committing an outrage upon a Hebrew. Moses, in the heat of his anger against the oppressor, slew him, and buried him in the sand. This may have been a rash act on his part, and not to be justified; but, in the over-ruling providence of God, it became a

fresh starting-point in his life. You may remember Stephen's commentary on this incident in the 7th chapter of Acts: "And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them: but they understood not." The motive, then, of Moses was good; yet must we allow that this smiting of the Egyptian was done on the sudden impulse of his own will, and not with the authority of God. It is only when the Lord interferes and commands Moses to act as the deliverer of the people that unmixed good is effected, and Israel's redemption accomplished.

We read that on the next day an incident somewhat similar occurred. Moses went out and found two Israelites in conflict,—brother contending against brother. "He would fain have set them at one again, ... Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a

judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known." The murder of the Egyptian reached the ears of Pharaoh, "and he sought to slay Moses." And so Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian. This was the first occasion on which he forsook Egypt,—not in obedience to any command of God, but in order to save his own life. This is not the period of the history referred to in my text. The apostle refers to the deliverance of the children of Israel from the house of bondage. Moses was commissioned by God to undertake this achievement; and in spite of Pharaoh's anger he triumphantly accomplished it.

Look at the particulars of this remarkable history. Moses was forty years old when he fled to Midian, and entered upon the humble duties of a shepherd to Jethro, priest of Midian, whose daughter he married. For forty years he dwells there. The sacred narrative passes over this long period in silence; but can we doubt that God was training him in the freedom and solitude of the desert, amidst its granite rocks and silent valleys, for the grand work

which was to be entrusted to his hands? The court of Pharaoh had taught him lessons of wisdom and of war; now in the wilderness of Arabia he was to be disciplined as the future redeemer of his brethren from the house of bondage. Many another great soul has been trained in silence and solitude for carrying out the Lord's appointed work. Not the luxury of the palace or the splendours of the court are the best preparation for greatness of soul; but the free air of the mountain, and the open range of the valleys lying under God's blue heaven. And as God, for these forty years, was preparing Moses for his mission as deliverer, so was He educating the people for their approaching deliverance. He allowed their tyrants to make heavy their chains, in order that they might be ready, at the fitting time, to welcome the tidings of liberty. Their bondage was becoming too grievous to be borne. The iron was entering their soul. Their spirit was crying out for deliverance. "And it came to pass in process of time, that the King of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham,

with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Moses is prepared for his work; the Israelites are prepared for their freedom. Moses is feeding his flock in the wilderness, near to Horeb, the mount of God,—one of those sacred mountains which was regarded with an awful reverence by the wandering Arab tribes, as though a divine presence rested on its solemn heights.

And now comes the call of Moses to the high office for which God had destined him. Out of the midst of the thorn-tree, and in a flame of fire,—symbol of that which was consuming His people in the fiery furnace of Egypt,—does the Lord appear unto Moses; "and behold, the bush burns with fire, and the bush is not consumed." Here God speaks to His servant, and reveals Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; declaring that He had seen the affliction of His people, had heard their cry, had come down to deliver, and to bring them into "the land flowing with milk and honey." Moses is to be sent unto Pharaoh with the command, in the name of God, to let His people go.

Moses hesitates at the thought of appearing before the cruel King, and of demanding the freedom of the two millions of slaves who had built the treasure cities of Rameses, had helped to erect their temples and raise their pyramids. "Who am I that I should go in to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" God assures him that He will be with him; and when the question arises as to how his countrymen shall be persuaded to believe, and hearken to his voice, he is told to address them in this simple message: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

God not only promises that the Hebrews shall hearken to the voice of Moses, but that when Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go, He shall interfere and stretch out His hand and smite Egypt with all His wonders. He also invests Moses with miraculous powers, and he makes the staff or shepherd's crook which he carries in his hand, humble though it be, the instrument of Divine power. This was to be the outward sign of his call. Still Moses is reluctant to undertake the mission, so diffident is he of his powers. "O my Lord, I am not eloquent,

neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant; but I am of slow speech, and of a slow tongue." And God re-assures him: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." But the shrinking heart of Moses still remonstrates: "O my Lord, send, I pray Thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send." And now God gives him his brother Aaron as his spokesman; and while Aaron was to be instead of a mouth unto Moses, Moses was to be to Aaron instead of God. So Moses returns to Egypt from his exile. He comes back with a resolute purpose to redeem his race from slavery. He dares the presence of Pharaoh, and with calm courage delivers his Master's message: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness." No doubt he shrank as a man from the anger of the haughty despot. And not without a cause. Pharaoh, had he not been restrained, perhaps by some superstitious dread, would have gladly taken his life. After the desolating storm of hail, and

before the plague of locusts, both he and Aaron were driven from Pharaoh's presence. And when the plague of darkness fell upon the land for three days, the tyrant sternly threatened: "See my face no more, for in the day thou seest my face, thou shalt die."

What nerved Moses to an undertaking so full of peril? What helped him to rise superior to fear? Not the miraculous powers with which he was invested; not any trust or confidence in self. "*Faith in God.*" "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." His faith was "the evidence of things not seen." Though the outward eye saw the King of Egypt and his power, the eye of faith saw God and realized His protecting care. He believed that there was One unseen who would shield him from danger; One in whom all power, and wisdom, and goodness were centred. That which was as real to him as the presence of Pharaoh was the Divine presence with him there, even there, as he stood at the foot of the King's throne and pleaded for the deliverance of his brethren. This belief was a rock against which the surges of human anger dashed and broke in vain. What to him was the King and his wrath?

What could it do to harm him? Nothing! He might have said, with one in after times, "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

And this is "faith:" "faith" which "is the evidence of things not seen," and which gives us the same courage that we should have if we actually saw the invisible God standing at our right hand and throwing over us His protecting shield. And this same faith nerved Moses to endure throughout the long and anxious period that intervened between his first appearance in Pharaoh's presence and the night when "he forsook Egypt," leading the Hebrews forth from their slavery to the freedom of the wilderness. Moses never once faltered in his mission of redemption; he persevered until it was accomplished. God indeed wrought with His servant, and, making bare His arm, sent such tremendous plagues upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians that they were awe-stricken, and became urgent that the people should depart.

Egypt herself "thrust them forth in terror," and besought them to depart out of her coasts. "Egypt was glad at their departing, for they were afraid of them." The powers of the world to come acting visibly before their eyes, and bringing sorrow and disaster into their homes, so acted upon the Egyptians that they became suppliants to those over whom they had formerly tyrannized. Moses speaks to Pharaoh, not as a captive, but a conqueror. "And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God until we come thither." But before the children of Israel marched forth triumphantly they demanded restitution of the treasures of which they had been robbed during their many years of bondage. They "asked,"—not "borrowed," as in our translation, and they asked boldly and resolutely "of the Egyptians, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment," and

they carried these spoils with them as men whose own they were, and who for so long had been defrauded of their rightful due. Thus provided for their exodus, they went up with all their armies out of "the land of Egypt, the house of bondage." Pharaoh, in sending the people forth with their herds and flocks, was acting under the influence of terror, for Egypt had become as a valley of death, and the hearts of the people were shaken under the presence of God's fearful judgments. But there might be a reaction from this alarm, as there had been before; and Pharaoh might again harden his heart, and follow with horses and chariots, his heart thirsting for vengeance, and his purpose steadfast to recover the fugitives to a harder and more bitter bondage. In such a case what was Moses to do? He was at the head of a multitude of men, women, and children without discipline, and in no sense a match for the powerful and well-trained armies of Egypt. Moses, might, therefore, even at the last moment, and though God had interfered visibly on the behalf of His chosen, well "fear the wrath of the King." And what was to re-assure his mind and keep him steadfast to his task? What was

to lift him above all sense of danger, and urge him to pursue the path before him with active and unconquerable determination? "Faith." "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

Brethren, it is only they who have such "faith" that can "endure." It is the sense of God's presence that gives us strength to rise above the fear of man, and to hold on our way through good report and evil report, through honour and dishonour, and which makes us more than conquerors over the enemies that oppose our path. Amid the perils which duty calls us to brave, the sacrifices which God calls us to make, the trials through which our heavenward path may lead us, it is the belief that God is near that keeps us calm and sends us on our way rejoicing. Through all the storms and clouds of this lower world,—through its mists and darknesses,—we look upward; and there, in the midst of the glow of brightness which surrounds the throne, we see the glory of God, and Jesus standing at His right hand. Whence the boldness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, which prompted them to encounter the sevenfold

heated furnace, rather than "bow down before the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up?" They "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." What was the secret of Daniel's strength when threatened to be thrown into the den of hungry lions ready to tear him limb from limb? "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." What supported Paul as he stood unarmed and helpless before Kings, and in the face of scourge, and sword, and axe, witnessed a good confession, and bore faithful testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ? "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." What, in later days, strengthened Martin Luther, as he stood up before Princes, and Prelates, and a host of enemies in arms, boldly upholding the truth at the imminent hazard of his life: "Here I stand: I cannot do otherwise; God help me! Amen"? "He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

It is only thus that *we* can "endure." Brethren, pray for and strive after the faith which sees the invisible. It will cause light to arise amid the darkness, and illumine the dreariest night with the bright star of hope. Such faith sheds a calm over the moaning

surges of life's stormy sea; it gives peace in the midst of battle; for it shows us "the Captain of the Lord's hosts" standing at our right hand, covering us with His shield, and protecting us from the onslaught of the foe. This faith gives the believer power to say in life, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident;" and in death to exclaim, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Living by this faith and dying in this faith the believer shall live and die unto the Lord. In life he shall glorify God, and in death he shall pass into the unveiled splendour of the eternal light, where he shall "see face to face, and know even as he is known:" faith exchanged for sight; hope swallowed up in fruition.

Such shall be the exceeding blessedness which shall crown the portion of all those who now "endure, as seeing Him who is invisible."

XIV.

The Passover.

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them." —HEBREWS xi. 28.

WE have in these words another instance of the triumphs of faith, of its true nature, and its genuine fruits. Moses takes God's Word as evidence of an approaching catastrophe of which there was no visible sign. He believed that the destroying angel would pass through the land of Egypt, and smite all the firstborn, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat upon his throne even unto the firstborn of the maid servant that was behind the mill, and all the firstborn of beasts. He believed that the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of the Israelites, would preserve them from destruction. He placed credit in the warnings and the promises of God, and obeyed

implicitly the Divine voice. So his "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

You will remember how, when the set time to deliver Israel had come, Moses was commissioned to go to Pharaoh with these words: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Pharaoh insolently replies, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." God might have punished him at once, and sent the destroying angel through the length and breadth of the land without a moment's pause, but He restrains His avenging arm. He endeavours by less appalling, though still terrible judgments, to make an impression on the hard heart of Egypt's King, if peradventure he will let the Israelites go. He brings upon the land storm, hail, murrain, thick darkness, and signs and wonders stern and startling, calculated to subdue Pharaoh to His will. But although plague after plague is sent,—the very waters being turned into blood, and every herb

of the land being devoured by a swarm of locusts,—yet does the King harden his heart the more, refusing to obey the Lord, or hearken to His voice. And now, when God has by the first nine plagues vindicated His power, and proved that He has only been "waiting to be gracious," He resolves to inflict the judgment that had been first threatened. In the darkness of midnight the destroying angel is sent, with his glittering sword, through Egypt, to smite down all the firstborn, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sits on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that is in the dungeon. And so in the month of Nisan, in the eighteenth century before the Christian era, in a night much to be observed unto the Lord, every house is filled with mourning and lamentation and woe.

Let us imagine ourselves in the land of Egypt on the night of Israel's deliverance. The shadows of night have long rested over all the land, and the Egyptians have returned to their homes from the mart and from the field, from the revel and the dance. The busy world lies hushed in silence. The stars are shining, and the bright moon is in the sky. Not a footfall sounds in the empty streets. But now the stillness is

broken by a dread and mysterious sound. It is the rushing of the destroying angel's wings, as he proceeds on his fearful errand of vengeance, and sweeps through the land, carrying death and desolation in his path. There rises from every house an exceeding bitter cry,—"a loud, frantic, funeral wail,"—wrung from the hearts of parents, as they gaze on the dead bodies of their firstborn. Mothers see their infants stricken down by a sudden visitation; fathers behold the pride and joy of their lives turned in a moment into senseless clay. "There is not a house where there is not one dead." In the royal palace, in the guarded prison, in the lowly hut, the angel of death has been doing his avenging work; for every family has to mourn its dead, and the cry of a smitten people wails up to heaven.

Look at another scene. We are in the home of one of the Hebrews. Though it is night, "when deep sleep falleth upon man," yet all the household is astir. What meaneth this eager excitement and activity? Here are men who have their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, their staves in their hands, like those prepared for a long journey. Four days previously they

had gathered the bleating flocks from their different pastures, and sought up and down them till "a lamb without blemish" had been found, "a male of the first year," perfect and mature. For four days this lamb, chosen as an offering, and taken from the rest of the flock, was set apart by itself. And to-night the father of the Hebrew home brings forth the lamb in presence of the household, and puts it to death; and as the blood flows to the knife he catches it in a basin, and amid solemn silence directs that the carcase be roasted with fire. "Not a bone of the lamb is to be broken;" no part of the flesh is to be carried forth out of the house: the whole is to be eaten in one house, not a fragment left,—for the morrow will find them gone,—nor is any of the family to pass the threshold till the morning. And what is this that the head of the household now proceeds to do? Mark how he takes a "bunch of hyssop, and dips it into the blood that is in the basin, and strikes the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin." When this ceremony is finished the whole household stands with sandalled feet and girded loins and staff in hand, at the family board, and in

haste begins to eat the lamb, taking with it unleavened bread and bitter herbs. As they are thus engaged there is a deep stillness in the chamber; a reverential awe settles upon all hearts. And this feeling of dread increases as midnight approaches, and it deepens into intensity as the rushing of the angel's wings is heard passing over their door, to smite the Egyptians, whose firstborn is doomed to destruction.

And how is it that their own house is spared? How comes it that the angel does not fold his wings at the Israelite's door,—that *there* he enters not to fulfil a mission of death? Because he sees the blood of the Pascal Lamb upon the lintel and on the two side posts. It is the mark of the blood which preserves the Hebrew household from being overtaken in the destruction of the Egyptians on "this night of the Lord, to be observed of the children of Israel in their generations."

Let us now turn our thoughts to the typical significance of the passover,—the most sacred of the Jewish festivals, and the only one that has outlived the Jewish polity. The Pascal feast pointed to the future. The redemption from the land of Egypt, with its ever-recurring memorial,

contained the germ and promise of the salvation of the Church. The lamb perpetually offered to commemorate the past redemption from Egypt, pointed the repentant eye of faith to the Lamb of God to be slain in the fulness of time for the sin of the world. When "Christ our Passover" was sacrificed for us, then did the purpose of God, which lay enclosed as an embryo in the Pascal institution, become fully developed.

The lamb was to be "without blemish, and without spot: a male of the first year." This finds its antitype in "the holy child Jesus;" who although made of a woman, was miraculously kept free from all the stains of our corrupt and fallen humanity. The innocent lamb, spotless, and separated from the flock, was a perfect type of Him who was "without spot or blemish;" who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Though Jesus took our sins upon Him, He was absolutely without sin, pure, and worthy of all blessing. "He gave Himself an offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour." He was the incarnation of all that is great, and good, and pure, and sublime in the Godhead.

Our sins were only transferred to Him by imputation. Nothing more. Had he not been

perfectly sinless He could have rendered no atonement for our sins. As the lamb was to be "a male of the first year, without blemish," so did He, in the prime of His manhood, and in His spotless purity, offer up His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. When His human powers and faculties attained their full maturity,—when as yet no weakness or decay marred His strength or affected His vigour,—"He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

Again, it was commanded concerning the Paschal Lamb, that they were "not to break a bone thereof." For the Lamb was to be a symbol of unity: the unity of God with the people whom He had taken into covenant with Himself. Now this type was remarkably fulfilled at the crucifixion. It is written in the Gospel, that when "Jesus cried with a loud voice"—showing that He did not die from exhaustion, but that, as He Himself had said, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again"—as soon as He had "cried with a loud voice, He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." You are aware that there was something singular in the fact that Jesus died

so soon. Crucifixion was a lingering death. The person nailed to the cross was many hours in dying. That such was the case is proved by the suffering of the two malefactors who were crucified with our Lord. According to the Jewish law, the bodies of those who were hanged on a tree must be removed on the same day on which they died. The Jews therefore besought Pilate that the limbs might be broken, and thus an end put to the agonies of those who were crucified. This was usually done with clubs; after which a stroke on the breast usually terminated the life of the unhappy criminal. When Pilate sent the soldiers to perform this duty, "they brake the legs of the first and of the second: but when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs." And the Evangelist adds this comment: "These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled: "A bone of Him shall not be broken." Again, the lamb was to be "roast with fire." What was this but a type of the sufferings which Jesus endured when God "made His soul an offering for sin"? The roasting of the lamb, that it might be prepared for the family of the believing Jew, was intended

to furnish an image of the wrath of God,—of the pangs which the Saviour had to pass through, when "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities:"—when the fires of Divine Justice descended upon our Substitute, exacting from Him as a living sacrifice the full penalty of a world's transgression.

When the lamb had been duly roasted according to the command, it was to be eaten with many significant observances, each of which is worthy of remark. But first let us fasten our thoughts on the fact that it was to be *eaten.* Each member of the family was commanded to partake of the flesh. Does not this teach us that not only is the blood of Christ to be sprinkled on the heart and conscience, but that we must *live on* Christ, and hourly derive fresh sustenance from His grace? "Verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The Communion Service of the Church of England beautifully applies these expressions, when it bids us "feed on

Him in our hearts, by faith with thanksgiving." It is on Christ Himself that we must live. However valuable be the doctrines taught in the Bible, these in themselves have no life for the soul. We must not rest in them: we must look above and beyond them to Jesus. Neither must we merge the Saviour in His work,—the Redeemer in His redemption. Never let the office of Christ obscure the glory of His person. It is not justification that we are to rejoice in, but the Justifier. "The life which I live in the flesh," saith the apostle, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." "Christ is our Life." "To me to live is Christ." So that Christ our Pascal Lamb, is to be our daily food; from Him directly are we to derive the nourishment needful to sustain us in our pilgrimage through the wilderness to a brighter and a better land. Hearken again to the Saviour's own words. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

Again: the lamb was to be "eaten with bitter herbs." This intimates that Christ must be eaten with the bitter herbs of repentance.

Whilst we rejoice in the thought of our deliverance from sin and hell through the mediation of our Substitute, we are to "mourn as we look on Him whom we have pierced;" we are to sorrow as we remember how we have crucified Him afresh, and "put Him to an open shame." There can be no genuine reception of Christ as a Saviour without the sincere acknowledgment that "the remembrance of our sins is grievous, the burden of them intolerable." True faith and godly sorrow for sin go hand in hand: the body and blood of Christ must be partaken of with the "bitter herbs" of deep and sincere repentance.

Again, the paschal lamb was to be "eaten with unleavened bread." The meaning of this command is fully explained by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthiaus: "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast; not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." "Leaven" is generally used in Scripture as an emblem of deceit and guile. Thus, for instance, our Lord bids us "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." So that our reception of Christ must be a heart reception;

"the form of godliness" must be accompanied with "the power." We must be real, earnest, sincere. Religion is to have a place below the surface. "The kingdom of God is within us." "A name to live" is not sufficient; we must be in very truth alive. And if there be "a true faith," there will be "a good conscience." "Our rejoicing," says St. Paul, "is the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." It is only they who "exercise themselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man," that are ready to leave Egypt, and at the call of God to enter upon the inheritance which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Lastly, the paschal lamb was to be eaten by the Israelites with "their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, their staves in their hands;" and they were to "eat it in haste," as men prepared for a journey. Egypt was to be left at once: there was to be no delay, no tarrying. The fleshpots, the leeks, the onions, and garlic were all to be abandoned; and the Israelites were thenceforward to set their faces like a flint, and so

follow whithersoever the Lord would lead them. For what was Egypt with its firstborn doomed to death,—Egypt so soon to be swept by the avenging wing of the destroyer? What was this land of Egypt but a figure of the world as it lieth in the wicked one, sunk in darkness and sin? The redemption of God's people, therefore, from this land of idolatry and superstition,—this land where they were oppressed by cruel bondage,—was the type of the redemption of the Church from the spiritual slavery, the sinful appetites and fleshly desires which rule the souls of men. As out of Egypt God called His sons in ancient days, so out of the world does He call His children now. "He has redeemed us unto Himself to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" a people who are to "show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." And just as God in His wisdom and goodness prepared the children of Israel by hardship and tribulation for their departure from Egypt, its flesh-pots and coarse delights, so does He now wean His people by sorrow and trial from the sinful pleasures of the world, and awaken them to nobler hopes and higher joys. Just as the

oppression of their taskmasters caused the Hebrews to yearn after redemption from the house of bondage, so the afflictions of earth and the sufferings of this present time cause the Christian to long for deliverance "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

And is there not cause to "come out and be separate from the world,"—the very same cause which Israel had to escape from Egypt? Egypt was doomed: and is not the world under a sentence of condemnation? The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." The people of God hold the same relation to the world at large as the Hebrews did to the Egyptians. True, we know not the day, nor the hour: but judgment is not the less certain. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." God has not said to His people, "In such or such a night I will pass through the earth, and will smite it with a curse; and I will turn the wicked, and all the nations that forget Me, into hell;" but His threatenings, like His promises, are sure and certain.

And who are they that shall have confidence and safety in the great day of the Lamb's wrath? They, and they only, who have the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on their souls now, cleansing them from all sin. These shall be delivered from the world's condemnation. But mark the awful contrast! The man who is found at the Lord's coming, unwashed, from his guilt,—who carries about him the plague-spot of unforgiven sin,—he shall be only as a scabbard for the keen and polished sword of Divine anger. He shall be "driven from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

Is the blood upon your door-posts? Has the lintel of your hearts been sprinkled with the precious drops which flowed from the wounded side of Jesus? If during the coming night, when silence is over the land, our sleep were to be broken by the wild shriek of terror and dismay which shall be wrung from all kindreds of the earth as they see the Son of man coming with clouds,—would the mark of the blood be found on our consciences, and its peace and power be felt in our hearts?

Brethren, nothing else than this blood can purge away sin. And we all need its cleansing

power. We are sinners, miserable sinners: sin has defiled the whole man,—our head, and heart, and hands,—our body, soul, and spirit. We have sinned against the Father's love, the Saviour's mercy, the Spirit's grace. Sin has stained our holiest services,—so that our very repentance needs to be repented of, and our tears to be washed in the blood of Christ. When we look upon the past; when we call to mind all our selfishness, our lukewarmness in God's service, our want of fervour and holy zeal; when we think of our sins of omission and commission, of thought, and word, and deed,—well may we fall on our knees, and with our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, cry to God in heaven, "Oh, my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown into the heavens." Truly we may eat,—with the bitter herbs of repentance and contrition, with the crucifixion of the flesh, with the mortification of our lusts,—that Paschal Lamb, whose "flesh is meat indeed," and whose "blood is drink indeed."

"Weep not for broad lands lost;
Weep not for fair hopes crossed;

Weep not when limbs wax old;
Weep not when friends grow cold;
Weep not that death must part
Thine and the best-loved heart.
Yet weep,—weep all thou can,—
Weep, weep: because thou art
A sin-defilèd man."

Such tears are holy tears. Such tears are healing tears. "They that sow in tears" like these, "shall reap in joy." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Come, "gird up the loins of your mind: take your pilgrim's staff in hand; and with the cross of redemption on your brow, and the blood of redemption on your heart, up and follow the Captain of your salvation out of Egypt. See, there is before you the fiery pillar,—the manna,—the Spiritual Rock; and if you will dare to leave Egypt, and to go forth into the desert, God will be your Guide, and will lead you on your homeward way, and you shall reach that promised land where all sighing and sorrow shall flee away; where "nothing shall be seen but joy and gladness," nothing heard but "thanksgiving and the voice of melody." Why should you hesitate? Have you not the promise: "My presence shall go with thee: I will give thee rest"?

XV.

The Passage of the Red Sea.

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."—HEBREWS xi. 29.

THIS verse records the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, and the destruction of their Egyptian enemy in the mighty waters. We have seen how the faith of Moses was exhibited in keeping the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood: now we are to consider the faith of the whole congregation of the Israelites as they passed, under his conduct, through the waters of the Sea.

After the firstborn of Egypt had been slain by the destroyer, and Israel had been preserved by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, the Hebrews went forth from the house of bondage, and journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, a town about 30 miles distant These places were

situated in the north of Egypt, and lay in the direction which would naturally be taken by travellers from Egypt to Canaan. Despite all the oppression of the Pharaohs, the Israelites were "about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle." God, "who frustrateth the tokens of liars, and maketh diviners mad,"—who "turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish," caused the oppressed people to multiply even under the rod of the oppressor. And He that so blessed them in their house of bondage, watched over them still, and "led them forth as a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." Their first encampment, "in Etham in the wilderness," was marked by His visible and mysterious presence; for we read that "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night; He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people." Succoth was the first station of the marching Hebrews. Their next station was Etham, "in the edge of

the wilderness"—a place from which the desert might be reached by an easy route, and from which, passing northwards, they might follow the track by the way of the sea, to Palestine. Moses, who knew the region well, and was a man of large forethought and great resources, was thus leading the people by the natural route through the wilderness of the Red Sea. As they are encamped at Etham, a message comes from God that he is to turn southwards, and to lead the Israelites into a mountainous country, where they shall be shut up in a wild gorge, with the Egyptian host behind, the deep sea in front, and such precipitous cliffs on either hand that there shall be no way of escape northward along the shore. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamd by the sea."

Why was this strange command given, to take a course which must involve them in difficulties to all appearance insurmountable? It was that they might see and understand that their deliverance was due to no human wisdom,

—was to be the work of no human arm. Their present strait was ordered purposely by God: it was to be a trial of their faith. And we find that at first the faith of the Hebrews failed. "When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." This cry of terror seems to contradict the statement of the apostle: "By *faith* they passed through the Red Sea." But this was but a momentary alarm, a sharp but short cry of terror,—a brief panic, which was soon to pass away under the assurance that God was on their side, and would deliver them from their strait. And though the people staggered for a time through unbelief, yet their Leader was

still steadfast, facing all difficulties without shrinking and without fear. He was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." Placed as they were in a narrow defile of the mountain,—pursued behind by the forces of Egypt,—barred in front by an arm of the sea, his voice is still cheerful and brave: "Fear ye not: stand still, see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

This was strong faith. Moses saw the danger, and knew it to be imminent. He understood it as clearly as did the people. He felt his own helplessness, and his responsibility as their leader. He saw no way of escape. He believed, however, that God had not redeemed them from Egypt to forsake them now, and that He would deliver them from their foe. He cried therefore unto the Lord, not in abject terror, but in the spirit of trust, and pleading the promises of God. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch

out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get Me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." Still the enemy was approaching, and the night was about to set in. "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night."

See how God interposes Himself between His people and their enemies, and prevents them from being injured by the malice of the foe. And mark how that which gives light to His redeemed is a source of darkness to the enemy. Is it not so with the Gospel? "We are unto

God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life."

And now consider the faith of Moses. He believes the word of God. He lifts up his rod, and stretches out his hand over the sea, believing that the waters shall be divided, and that, standing up as a wall unto the Israelites on their right hand and on their left, they shall make a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass through on dry land. And so indeed it happened as the Lord had promised. The Egyptians, seeing the Israelites marching through triumphantly, attempt to do the same. But this is on their part only an act of presumption. They had no promise of the Divine protection. They are fighting against the God who has taken the Hebrews under His protection. "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the

Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses."

The cry of their fierce enemies had been: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." . . . "But Thou O Lord, didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." No wonder that they before whom such wonders were displayed, and who were so miraculously preserved—no wonder that the redeemed of the Lord should have exclaimed: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" No wonder that Miriam should have taken up the timbrel, and with the bands of rejoicing women have answered, saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

We see illustrated here, in a most remarkable manner, the difference between faith and unbelief. Moses and the Israelites believe in God and in His word. The sea rolls back before them: its waters stand up like solid walls

of crystal while they march through in safety. Pharaoh and his armies, in unbelief, essay to do the same, and are drowned. When the well-being of God's people is in question, the laws of nature are suspended in their behalf; when God's enemies are to be dealt with, the sea resumes its course, and vengeance is accomplished. Faith is accompanied by salvation: ruin is the recompense of presumptuous unbelief. In this history there is a great lesson of instruction for the Church of Christ. The Jewish nation in its bondage under Pharaoh, and its redemption out of Egypt, was a type of the Christian Church in her connection with the world, and her final deliverance from all her enemies. God is calling us out of Egypt: calling us away from the dominion of the world, the flesh, and the devil,—the three hard task-masters who would hold us in bondage, and make us serve with rigour. He calls us away from the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions, and the flesh-pots; and encourages us to come forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He bids us exchange the service of sin and sensual pleasures, for the desert and the fiery pillar,—for the manna and the Spiritual

Rock. His voice is crying to us all: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give Thee light." He knows that none to whom He has given a conscience and a soul can be happy under bondage to sin, or in the devil's toils, or in slavery to the follies and fashions of the world. There is a weariness in all these things which will sooner or later make itself felt; and the cry of a sickened heart will be wrung out in such words as these: "Who will show us any good?" And God knows it well. He knows the "vanity and vexation of spirit" that follow upon a life wasted in "spending money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not." He would free you from your bondage; He would save you out of your distresses, and bring you out of darkness into marvellous light. Listen to what He says, and apply the words to your own case. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land, into a good land and a large."

Again: God, who pities the sorrows and afflictions of His people, has appointed a Leader to emancipate you from your bonds. Listen to the Apostle: "It became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Just as Moses pitied, with a large and generous pity, the miserable condition of his brethren under the tyranny of their taskmasters; so does this greater than Moses, with a loving and tender sympathy compassionate the sorrows of those who are in bondage to sin and Satan. He is a Saviour exactly suited to our need: with all the patience and meekness of a man, and with all the strength and wisdom of God,—one who can give us victory over all our foes, making us "more than conquerors through His love. These enemies that beset you He has already grappled with, and overcome: their blood has dyed His garments, and stained all His raiment, and He has trampled them under foot. The world, the flesh, and the devil, all are strong;

but Christ is stronger; and if you march under His banner, and fight a good fight, upheld by His grace you shall march on to certain victory.

You may often have to cry when the sense of indwelling sin is heavy,—fightings within and fears without: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But throw yourself at such times on the arm of Christ: trust in Him; and "sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." You may appear to be shut up between Migdol and the sea; you may look *back* with dread on Egypt pursuing; *forward* to the sea of doubt and difficulty, across which there seems to be no passage: but remember in such times that He that is for you is greater than all that be against you. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." Man's extremity is God's opportunity. When there was no eye to pity, His eye looked on; when there was no arm to save, His right hand intervened. So will it always be. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Stand still. Be trustful, hopeful, rejoicing in the Lord, and having no confidence in the flesh. "Stand still," and you shall "see the salvation of God."

Again: see the joy and triumph of victory. What must have been the feeling of the Israelites, when, safe on the farther shore, they saw the deep and wide sea flowing between them and the land of bondage, their tyrants dead upon the strand, and the free and broad desert before them, across which they were to pass to the land of promise? How great their gladness as they stood on the borders of the wilderness with the glorious mountain ranges of Horeb in the distance gleaming in the sunlight, the emerald verdure at their feet, and the cloudless skies above, and with the certain knowledge in their hearts that the tyranny of Egypt was at an end for ever. What a new and a higher life began from that hour when the sea covered the enemy, and they sank as lead in the mighty waters! This was the key-note of that magnificent hymn which rang over the waters when "Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord, and spake saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown in the sea." That song was a last farewell to the sorrows and sufferings of the house of bondage; it was a prelude to the joy which

should be theirs when the Lord should bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, in the glorious "land which flowed with milk and honey."

And so, when redeemed from Egypt, the burden of our guilt is taken away, and the deep sea of the Divine love sweeps between us and the past, with its bondage and its shame, and we see our enemies vanquished by Christ, and we stand safe on the borders of the wilderness, whence God shall lead us, by pillar of fire and cloud, to the promised land,—joy and gladness fill our hearts, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. The wilderness may have its varying experience and discipline; it may have its wells of water and its palm-trees; or it may have its wells of bitterness, and its vales of weeping, its burning drought and its scarcity of bread; but Faith will feel assured that "all things are working together for good." We shall know that through discipline, and toil, and trial, and tears, God is "leading us forth by the right way, that we may reach the city of habitation." And we shall go on calmly and trustingly because we know that the wilderness is the sure and certain way to the land where we

shall be safe against the pursuit of every foe. The enemies that sought to block our way to heaven, we shall see them no more for ever: the wide deep sea of Eternity shall flow between them and us. And the thought that neither the world, nor the flesh, nor the devil,—nor sin, nor death, nor hell, can reach us any more,—will be the spring of that new song which shall blend with the harpings of the Seraphim before the throne of God. The magnificent hymn of the redemed shall ring over the sea of glass mingled with fire, as they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy."

XVI.

The Fall of Jericho.

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."—HEBREWS xi. 30.

MOSES had "fought the good fight, had finished his course, and kept the faith," and died on the borders of the promised land. He resigned his charge and his life together into the Lord's hands. God raised up another man of mark to succeed him,—one well fitted to lead the people through a series of brilliant successes, and to settle them peacefully in the promised land. His name was originally "Hoshea," or "salvation;" but when he led the spies it was changed to "Jehoshua," or "the Lord is my salvation." The name Joshua was that by which our Lord was called. The name in its Greek form, "Jesus," was given to Him because "He was to save His people from their sins." And it is interesting to note how, in the salvation of

Israel by Joshua, we may discover the leading features that distinguish the salvation which Christ has accomplished for His people.

Under the conduct of Joshua, Israel had marched through the waters of the Jordan, which divided before them, and passed over into the land of their inheritance "right against Jericho." Jericho was a city of the Jebusites, one of the seven nations whose country had been given to Abraham. It was the border-town of Canaan, and the key to the whole position. It was surrounded with strong walls, and had its gates closely shut against the children of Israel. Joshua had invested it with his army, no doubt thinking that it would be taken in ordinary warfare. On the evening before the day on which he is to make the onset, the angel of the Lord appears to him, and announces that God had given Jericho and its King, and its mighty men of valour, into his hands. And now the "Captain of the Lord's hosts" (the hosts of Jehovah, or the angels) proceeds to give his commands. Israel is to compass the city daily for six days, and seven priests are to bear before the ark seven trumpets of ram's horns. But when the seventh day dawns they are to

compass the city seven times, and the priests are to blow with the trumpets. "And it shall come to pass, when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man strait before him."

Joshua believed the word of the Lord, and acted upon it without hesitation. In this we have an instance of the "faith," which "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." He was encamped before one of those cities which the spies, who went up with him forty years before, had described as "great, and walled up to heaven." His army, though numerous, was unaccustomed to war. The people with whom he was to contend were proverbial for their stature and prowess; and the reports of their valour and strength had so alarmed the Israelites of a former generation, that, losing heart on the border of their inheritance, they fell back to die in the wilderness. And what had Joshua on his side to set against an enemy so formidable? The word of the Lord,—the promise of Jehovah. He had little

[illegible] and he [illegible] might [illegible] The city was [illegible] were to be [illegible] This was a [illegible] which human reason [illegible] a walled [illegible] was it [illegible] Nevertheless [illegible] gave [illegible] and perseverance [illegible] was genuine. For six [illegible] at the head of the [illegible] procession; and the [illegible] before the ark, blew [illegible] And on [illegible] early, about the [illegible] compassed the city [illegible] there ever so strange a [illegible] was raised; no sword drawn; [illegible] Trumpets were sounded; [illegible] were marching, but no spear was [illegible] was struck. The Israelites are [illegible] to march, and not fight; and for [illegible] days they are to "go round about" [illegible] in the hope that, without any corres-

ponding effort on their part, the ramparts of Jericho shall fall down!

Now comes faith's reward. When the seventh day was come, and the city had been compassed seven times, the word was given, and Israel, partakers of Joshua's faith, shouted in response to Joshua's invitation. The people believed that although Jericho's walls still rose proudly in their strength, as little likely to be shaken to their base by a shout as the everlasting hills themselves, yet that, as their voices rang through the firmament, God would come forth as He had promised, and the city would be overthrown. "So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." And thus it was "not by might, nor by power," not by warlike onset, or chivalrous assault, that a breach was made in the battlements and forts; but it was "by faith" that "the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

Let us now inquire what lessons we, "on whom

else. This was his tower of strength; and he must act in the way, however strange it might seem, that God had appointed. The city was to be compassed; the trumpets were to be blown; the people were to shout. This was a method of proceeding at which human reason might scoff. Such a way of attacking a walled city had never been heard of before: was it likely that it should succeed? Nevertheless Joshua believed, and being strong in faith, gave glory to God. His patience and perseverance proved that his faith was genuine. For six successive days he marched at the head of the people in solemn silent procession; and the priests, as they passed on before the ark, blew with the trumpets by his command. And on the seventh day they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city seven times. Was there ever so strange a siege? No mound was raised; no sword drawn; no engine planted. Trumpets were sounded; armed men were marching, but no spear was hurled, no blow was struck. The Israelites are commanded to march, and not fight; and for seven several days they are to "go round about" the walls, in the hope that, without any corres-

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the third. The seven days prescribed by God—the whole life—must be employed in the busy work of "following after holiness," and maintaining a warfare against evil. As to freedom from conflict, which some boast of having attained,—as to what is called "the rest of faith," meaning no trouble from indwelling sin,—as to an experience all peaceful and joyous and calm,—I believe it to be a delusion, a wile of our great adversary the devil to entrap the unwary, and throw them off their guard. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The busier we are in watching and fighting and praying, the safer and happier we shall be.

Turn your eyes once more to the striking spectacle presented before the walls of Jericho. At the command of Joshua the armed forces of Israel compass the city, day by day marching over the same ground, in the same manner, and, as it might appear, with the same want of success. It is not until the seventh day,—nay, not until the city has been compassed seven times on the seventh day,—that the leader bids them shout: "for the Lord hath given you the city." Thus are *we* kept in faith and patience passing round the walls of Jericho. The victory

in our walk, and that these walls cannot stand when we come to the measure and number of our perfection. A good heart groans under the sense of his infirmities, fain would be rid of them, and strives, and prays; but when he hath all done, until the end of the seventh day, it cannot be. If a stone or two moulder off from these walls in the meantime, that is all; but the foundation will not be removed till then." "There remaineth a rest to the people of God," but *now* is the time for labour and conflict. The images used in Scripture to describe a Christian's life are suggestive of continuous and sustained effort. It is a battle to be fought in complete armour,—armour which must never be laid aside till the victory be won; it is a race which must be "run with patience" by all who would reach the goal and obtain the prize: a narrow path, along which they who would enter the gate of life must make their toilsome way. It is only by continual watching, warfare, and prayer, that we can overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and maintain our Christian steadfastness. The Jericho of sin, walled and fortified by our corruptions and lusts, will not fall at the first assault,—not at the second, or

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is ours in prospect: not in possession. The strongholds of sin have not been broken down in the heart; the world, the flesh, and the devil are not yet under our feet, perfectly and entirely destroyed. There is no respite from our watch and warfare. But we march against Jericho in full assurance of hope. The conflict will one day cease: the victory shall soon be ours. Let us be patient, then, and courageous. Blessed are they that wait upon God. "All things are possible to him that believeth." "War a good warfare." "Endure hardness as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ." Remember that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." We shall, in God's appointed time, join in the triumphant shout, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And when the day of conflict is ended, the glorious inheritance secured, the eternal rest enjoyed; if it be asked by what means the mighty were vanquished, the city overthrown, the thankful response shall be this: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

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fortress of idolatry by the preaching of the Gospel. The trumpets of rams' horns were the same as the jubilee trumpets, which were blown every fiftieth year, proclaiming liberty to the captive, and the restoration to the poor of their forfeited inheritance. As by the continued blast of these rams' horns the great Canaanitish fortress was attacked; so by the foolishness of preaching did the apostles assault the giant fortress of heathendom, and sought to expel Satan from the strongholds within which he had been long entrenched. As in the case of the literal Jericho, so also in the case of the figurative, there appeared a great disproportion between the means prescribed and the achievement to be wrought. What way could be made in the destruction of the city by the solemn procession of the Israelites round its walls,—by their carrying the ark, and by their blowing the trumpets? It was against all human calculation that Jericho could be stormed by such means as these: her defences weakened, her battlements thrown down! The men of Jericho might have laughed to scorn such simple mode of action as this; and so the enemy may have looked down from their walls with contempt. But God wrought on the behalf

of His people. The means were mighty, because the Lord had appointed them; and the people's faith embraced God's power. Thus did the marching shake the walls,—the trumpets' blast laid the foundation low.

So God has "chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and things that are not to bring to nought the things that are." The apostles went forth against a "world lying in the wicked one," with neither carnal might nor worldly wisdom enlisted on their side, but simply as preachers of a crucified Saviour,—heralds of the glad tidings of reconciliation between God and man. "We preach Christ crucified: to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." And how by a message so simple could they cast down ancient superstitions, and overthrow systems hallowed by time, sustained by might, and dear to the evil and corrupt heart of man? The Apostles and first preachers of Christianity, as they looked on the great work before them, and saw the world in possession of the enemy, might well have asked in dismay, "Who is

sufficient for these things?" But they went forth with the cross as their watchword, and faith as their companion, and soon found that though "the weapons of their warfare were not carnal," they were mighty through God "to the pulling down of strong holds, and to the bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." As they blew the jubilee trumpet of freedom, degrading superstitions received a shock; iniquity was restrained; idols were abolished; and Pagan temples gave way to Churches of the living God. The defences of Heathenism were so weakened, and such breaches made in its walls, that Christianity in a short time became the established religion of the greatest kingdom of the world.

And though the Jerichos of sin have not yet been fully destroyed, though "the dark places of the earth are still full of the habitations of cruelty, yet the work of demolition is still going on; we are bearing the ark,—we are blowing the trumpets; Christ is being preached, and sinners are "fleeing for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel." The Israelites had patiently to compass the city for six days; and on the seventh day they were to march

round it seven times. Our six days are not yet ended. We must go on in faith and hope: there must be no doubt, no hesitation. We may not as yet see many signs of the coming destruction that shall overtake every anti-Christian power; but the destruction is assured. The seventh day shall surely dawn. It shall be marked by a seven-fold earnestness in the use of all those means ordained by God for the triumph of the Gospel. The angel shall fly in mid-heaven with the everlasting Gospel to preach to all nations; the mystic sevens shall be accomplished; the Sabbath of rest shall come. The faith and patience of His people shall be rewarded. Every stronghold of evil shall be laid low: darkness shall give way to light; error to truth; infidelity to faith. Every heart shall be a home for Christ; every household a shrine for His worship: "the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." And when "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ," and the question is asked, "How was such a revolution effected, such a victory achieved?" the answer will still be given: "By faith the

walls of Jericho fell down, when they were compassed about seven days."

Thus we see how the fall of Jericho typifies the overthrow of every worldly power before the Lord, in the day when He shall come to lead His people into the promised land, and to establish His kingdom upon earth. However long the might of the enemy may sustain itself in opposition to the Lord's Christ, it will at last be utterly destroyed. We often read in the Prophets of the blowing of trumpets, as a signal and symbolical omen of the manifestation of the Lord in those great judgments through which He destroys one power after another, and maintains and extends His kingdom on the earth. In the Book of Revelation we have the seven trumpets blown by the seven angels, each blast followed by some judgment, until the seventh angel sounds, and the proclamation follows: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ." St. Paul tells us that at the consummation of all things, "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven .... with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God,"—to raise the dead, translate the living, judge the world; and, casting the

devil and death and hell into the lake of fire, to create "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell." And I doubt not that when the voice of the archangel is heard, and the trumpet blown, the shouts of the saved shall echo the cry. *Their* voices shall mingle with those which proclaim that His kingdom is come; *their* voices shall blend with the thunders of Jehovah, announcing "It is done!" They shall swell the Hallelujahs which sound throughout the universe: "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

And so every foe shall be vanquished, and the last enemy be destroyed; for death itself shall be swallowed up in victory. May we go up, led by "the Captain of our salvation," into the full possession of the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," reserved in heaven "for those who walked by faith upon earth," and are now to "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

XVII.

Rahab.

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."—HEBREWS xi. 31.

WE have seen how "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days." We are now to see how "by faith the harlot Rahab" was saved from perishing with her unbelieving countrymen, and how she became by grace one of the household of God.

When Joshua was appointed, after the death of Moses, to lead the children of Israel into the land of promise, he was anxious fully to understand the state and condition of Canaan. He therefore sent out two spies from the camp of Israel at Shittim, to make a survey of the country. On coming to Jericho these spies lodged in the house of Rahab, a young

unmarried woman, who dwelt in a house of her own, and alone, though she had a father and mother, and brother and sisters living in the city. She was a harlot, and probably kept a lodging-house for wayfaring men. She was engaged, as it would seem, in the manufacture of linen, and in the art of dyeing,—for which the Phœnicians were famous,—since the roof of her house was covered with stalks of flax put there to dry, and there was a stock of scarlet and crimson thread in the house. Her house was situated on the wall, probably near the town gate, so as to be convenient for persons coming in and going out of the city. She had heard, und so had her fellow-citizens, of the miraculous events which followed the Exodus from Egypt: the passage through the Red Sea, —the warlike achievements of the Israelites,— the destruction of Sihon and Og, and of the conquering march of Israel, on their way to Canaan. The knowledge of these mighty events led Rahab to believe in Israel's God, and to take part against her own countrymen in the battle for the town. She was impressed with the belief that Jehovah was the true God, and that it was His will that the Israelites should take possession

of the land of Canaan. When, therefore, the two spies came to her house, they found themselves under the roof of one who was friendly to their nation. When the King of Jericho learned that the men who had "come to search out all the country" were in her house, he sent to her, and demanded that they should be given up. But she concealed them by an artifice. "And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: and it came to pass about the time of shutting the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords; and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate." The conduct of Rahab in deceiving the King of Jericho's messengers with a false tale has been much discussed. There is no doubt that she departed from the strict line of truth. There was as much sin in her answer as there was faith in her practice. As she feared

God in not delivering up the spies, so she feared the King in dissembling.

But we must remember that she was a Gentile; and that truth was a virtue unknown to the heathen,—so much so, indeed, that St. Paul has again and again to urge on his Gentile converts the exhortion, "Lie not one to another, brethren, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds." It is only the Gospel that teaches men to "think on," and to practise, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." But whatever this woman's ignorance of the truthfulness required by God, we, brethren, are not left in darkness as to any point of Christian doctrine or morals; and we are to "stand, having our loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness," as well as "our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace." Rahab was just emerging out of darkness, into the light; her path was yet to "shine more and more unto the perfect day." But her faith was strong in God. She could use such confident words as these: "The Lord your

God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." She so fully believes, likewise, that God will give the land into the hands of Israel, that she makes the spies swear that they will show kindness unto her, and unto her father's house, and that they will save her kindred alive, and deliver their lives from death. The men readily take the proffered oath; and she lets them down by a cord through the window, and bids them flee to the mountain, where they are to hide themselves three days, till their pursuers be returned. "And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us sware. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by; and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she answered, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed; and she bound the scarlet line in the window." In this manner did it come to pass that by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them

that believed not; for we read in the 6th chapter of the Book of Joshua, where the event is recorded, that Joshua said unto the two men that had spied out the country, "Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day,"—that is the family of strangers of which she was reckoned as the head, continued to dwell among the children of Israel.

Such is the history of Rahab's faith, and her preservation. Let us now look at some of the lessons which it is calculated to teach.

And *first*, we have in the salvation of the Gentile Rahab, an early pledge of the gathering in of a Church from amongst the Gentiles, and of the future extension of the Gospel to all nations. Although God, for wise purposes of His own sovereign will, confined for a time the knowledge of Himself to one peculiar nation, yet it was always His intention to make Jews and Gentiles fellow-heirs of the same body in Christ, and to bring a people from the East and the West, and the North and the South, to "sit down with

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God." Though this truth was but obscurely made known in the earlier ages of the world's history, yet were intimations of it not unfrequently given, as in the case under review.

Rahab was in a very special manner a pledge that the Gentiles were to have an interest in the Incarnation of Christ; for we learn from our Lord's genealogy, in the first chapter of St. Matthew, that she became the wife of Salmon, the son of Naashon, and the mother of Boaz, Jesse's grandfather. It is imagined by some that Salmon, a Prince of the Tribe of Judah, was one of the spies whose life Rahab saved, and that gratitude for so great a benefit inspired him with an affection which led to a marriage, through which was wiped out any past disgrace that attached to her name. However this may be, it is certain that Rahab became the mother of the line from which David sprang, and eventually Christ. She was the great-grandmother of Jesse, the father of David, and thus had the honour of holding a position in the genealogy of our Blessed Lord. Nay, more, after her solemn union with the people of God, and her adherence to their religion and worship,

she is twice mentioned in Scripture in a way of praise, and is proposed as an example of both faith and obedience to the whole Church of Christ. Her faith is especially commended in the text; and St. James bears his testimony to the reality of that faith by which she was justified: "Likewise, also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" We see in this story the freeness of God's grace, and also its power. How is God's mercy magnified in the conversion of a sinner so great, —a heathen and a harlot,—one who had been living without hope in the world! What a door of hope is opened for the most worthless and wicked; for here we have a proof that there is no depth of guilt from which He is not able to rescue them, no height of privilege on which He is not able to place them. "Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound." Salvation, free as the air we breathe, is given without respect of persons, or regard to merit: "without money and without price."

To find Rahab in the catalogue of mothers "from whom Christ came as concerning the flesh," relieves our fears and sustains our hopes.

Indeed the pith of the Gospel message is imbedded in the good news that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost;" that "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And unless pardon were bestowed on the guiltiest, and mercy shown to the chief of sinners; unless men were chosen to eternal life, not from regard to merit, but of the freest mercy; unless they that were "far off" were to be "brought nigh by the blood of Christ,"—what hope would there be for us? Have *we* not "all gone astray like lost sheep," and "turned every one to his own way"? Have we not "done what we ought not to have done, and left undone what we ought to have done"? We may not be chargeable with any gross sin, with any flagrant offences against God's holy law; but is it not written that "he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all"? "Every sin is a transgression of the law," and is therefore fatal; for "the wages of sin is death;" and the law is so sacred that one breach of its commandments exposes to wrath, and excludes from heaven. "The soul that sinneth,"—whether its offences be many or few,—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." And when speaking of

sin, let me say that there are sins of the mind, the intellect, the spirit, which stand out in the sight of God just as odious and culpable as other sins which man is accustomed to regard as being more heinous. Indeed the intellect may be as really the seat and instrument of sin as the body. Satan, the author of all sin, is a spirit. The sins of which he is guilty are those of the intellect, not of the flesh. Beware of thinking lightly of sins of the mind. Is not covetousness a sin of the mind? and covetousness is idolatry. Is not unbelief a sin of the mind,—the deadliest and most fatal of all, and parent of all other sins? Is not the only sin which Christ says cannot be forgiven a sin of the intellect? "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." Be assured, then, that in whatever way the carnal mind may exhibit its workings, whether in outward "filthiness of the flesh," or "inward filthiness of the spirit," the sentence still holds good: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." We all stand in need of the mercy of God,—we are all debtors to the grace of God.

"There is no difference," for all have sinned. The generous man who boasts in his charity; the upright in his integrity; the purest woman in her chastity: "all have sinned,"—in thought, word, and deed, in mind and spirit, and have "come short of the glory of God."

Tried in the balance of God's holy law, who is not "found wanting"? Well is it said, "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" "Who then," you ask, "can be saved?" And with the Bible in my hand I answer, All may be saved,—the vilest, the guiltiest, the chief of sinners; for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." Blessed be God, there is no sin that may not be forgiven. Blessed be God, Christ "came to seek and to save that which was lost;" "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It is the excellency of Christ's blood that it "cleanseth from all sin;" so that if any man, looking back upon a guilty past, troubled by sins that are more in number than the hairs of his head, in

terror of Divine wrath, should cry out in fear and alarm, "What must I do to be saved?" I answer with St. Paul, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Yes: believe,—throw yourself upon the grace and goodness of Christ,—and God will bury your guilt in a fathomless ocean of mercy, saying, "I have cast thy sins into the depths of the sea;" "I have blotted out as a cloud thy transgressions, and as a thick cloud thy sins;" "As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed thy transgressions from thee;" "I will remember thy sins no more for ever." Brethren, "there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared." His mercy does not measure us by what we are. It "rejoiceth against judgment;" it not only has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," but it rejoiceth to save. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Therefore let all awakened sinners trust in that mercy. No one need despair who sees Rahab the harlot brought into the line of Israel, and thus becoming one of the women whose blood flowed in the veins of Christ; no

one need despond who remembers that "by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

I would draw your attention to the sign by which salvation was secured to Rahab. Her house was upon the town wall. It was probably the most exposed part of the city; more dangerous than any other spot. Yet when the walls of Jericho fell down before the blast of the trumpets, Rahab's dwelling-place remained secure. And wherefore? The spies had said to her, "Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by; and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And she said, According to, your words, so be it. And she sent them away and they departed; and she bound the scarlet line in the window." The scarlet line was the sign and pledge of Rahab's salvation. Was this scarlet line a type of redemption? It is interesting to notice how this "scarlet" colour runs through much of the ritual of the Law, and how it appears in the furniture of the

Tabernacle. The curtains of the Tabernacle were to be of blue, and purple and scarlet; and the hangings of the door of the tent were to be of blue, and purple, and scarlet. For the cleansing of the leper two birds were to be taken alive and clean, with cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop. And connecting this colour with the atoning sacrifices, we remember the promise of God: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But whether or no redemption be typified by the line of scarlet thread found in the window, that scarlet thread was to Rahab what the blood of the Paschal Lamb was to the Israelites on the night of their departure from Egypt. "Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood, and sprinkle the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians, and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." The safety of the Hebrews

consisted not in their having slain the Lamb; not in their eating it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs: but on the appointed sign—'the blood sprinkled on the lintel and two side posts of the door.' When the destroying angel saw the scarlet mark on their houses, he passed them over, and so they were preserved from destruction, And though it is true that the effect of "the scarlet line," like the blood on the Hebrew doors, was to save from a temporal destruction; yet there is no doubt that it also led to the spiritual salvation of Rahab. She was numbered amongst God's people, she forsook the worship of false gods; she entered the service of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so in the largest meaning of the words, in a sense that embraces heaven as well as earth, eternity as well as time,—"by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

Brethren, may we "bind the scarlet thread in the window;" may our hopes be fixed on the atonement of Christ; may we not be ashamed to confess Him before men; so that when the day of destruction shall arrive, and all the Jerichos of sin shall fall, and all the

strongholds of unbelief shall be pulled down, we may be safe from the wrath which shall overtake the ungodly. The day of long-delayed vengeance shall yet break upon the world. The Lord shall come forth to execute judgment upon His enemies. "He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." And who shall be saved in that "great and terrible day"? Those, and those only, on whom is found the blood of sprinkling. Nothing else can purge away sin. In this we must "wash our robes, and make them white." In this alone we must trust; of this alone we must make our boast. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood."

If we make Christ and His atoning sacrifice "all our salvation and all our desire," then, though the unbelieving and impenitent shall be suddenly roused out of their long indifference by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, the signal which has startled the ungodly will be but the sign that "our redemption draweth nigh." We shall know that God will put a difference between His friends and His enemies, even

as He did between Rahab and the other citizens of Jericho; yea, we shall know that, separated from destruction, and set apart for glory, we shall have an "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

XVIII.

Faith's Heroes.

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."—HEBREWS xi. 32—34.

THE Apostle in these verses no longer singles out his witnesses to the power of faith, or ascribes to them distinctly the particular triumph gained through the workings of this mighty principle. He groups them together as several out of many testimonies to the truth he has been striving to illustrate. From the histories of those whom he enumerates two great lessons are to be deduced: first, that faith will enable us to perform the grandest achievements; and secondly, that it will enable us to endure the

most terrible sufferings. He brings forward the names of some of the olden worthies who wrought these works of faith; and then goes on to mass together the mighty works which they had accomplished. He does not assign these deeds particularly to each one by whom they were wrought, but leaves them to be gathered from the sacred story. It is enough for his purpose that all these wonderful triumphs of faith are to be found among these witnesses to his argument: some wrought by one, some by another, and some achieved by those whose names he does not mention.

Now it may perhaps surprise us a little that St. Paul should bring together and propose as models for our imitation such men as Samson, whose life was stained by sin and shame; or Jephthah, whose vow was not more rash than guilty; or Gideon, who, taking the spoils of Midian, the gold, and the earrings, and the collars of his enemies, and forming them into an ephod, set it up as an object of idolatrous worship before the children of Israel. But you must always keep in mind the design of the Apostle in placing this group of personages before the Hebrews. He essays to encourage

his converts, and to assure them by all these examples, that faith in a God who "is a rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him" will carry them victoriously through all they have to do or suffer. "Faith," as it has been justly remarked, "thus taken in its vaguest and most extended view, ought to be restricted to those particular circumstances in which it was exercised, and according to the particular kind of promises which it embraced; or, not losing sight of obedience, in regard to these particular sacrifices which God requires us to make." Apply this to some of those whose examples are proposed as a pattern by St. Paul. If you ask why the Apostle encourages us to imitate personages so widely differing as Samson, the slave of a low lust, and Joseph, who turned away with a holy indignation from temptation; Jephthah, who rashly devoted his daughter to death, and Abraham, who sacrificed his son at the command of God; Gideon, who enticed the Israelites into idolatry, and Moses, who preferred "affliction with the people of God" to the "pleasures of sin" which are but "for a season," —the answer is to be found here: that whatever difference may have been in the characters

of these men of old, they are all worthy of notice in one important particular,—they illustrate the power and results of faith. Without taking upon us to determine whether Samson, and Jephthah, and Barak, and Gideon, had a saving Gospel-faith; yet since through faith they wrought great deeds, and made sacrifices for God, we have a reason for St. Paul's quoting them among those saints who embraced all the promises of God, and believed unto everlasting life. They all received a call from God to undertake a particular work, and to some of them were given special promises of success. Gideon was instructed in his work by an angel, Barak by the prophecy of Deborah, Samson by Divine direction to his parents. So was it with Samuel and David: they had their calls immediately from God. Jephthah was at first called by the people to his office and work; but God ratified the choice by giving to him His Spirit in an extraordinary manner. The principle that actuated the doings of these heroes was faith. They were satisfied of their call from God, and trusted in Him for assistance and success.

I pass on from these preliminary observations

to consider the great deeds accomplished. "Who through faith," saith the Apostle, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

(1) They "subdued kingdoms."

This generally is assigned to Joshua and David. Joshua subdued all the kingdoms in Canaan; David all those countries surrounding it, as Moab, and Ammon, Edom, Syria, and the Philistines. And if you ask how the conquest of kingdoms should be esteemed a fruit of faith, since they who have engaged in wars for the sake of extending their dominions have been for the most part led on by ambition, I answer that the kingdoms here spoken of as subdued by faith were of two kinds. Those within the country of Canaan, which were destroyed by Joshua at the command of God, because the inhabitants had forfeited their land and their lives to Divine justice by reason of their idolatry and wickedness and sin; and again, those which, bordering on Canaan, were conquered by David,

because they were enemies to the true God. It was the Almighty's will that they should be so far subdued that the country should be a quiet habitation unto His people. Hence this "subduing of kingdoms" was an act of faith, in that they did it at God's command, and sought to execute the Lord's righteous judgment for their sins.

(2) Through faith they "wrought righteousness." "Righteousness" is to be understood here in a judicial sense. These worthies were righteous in their rule and government: they administered justice and judgment to all over whom they had authority. The persons mentioned by the Apostle, being all of them rulers, or judges, this appears to be the proper exposition. And, considering the manifold temptations that lie in the path of those that are judges, and the opposition which they are certain to meet in the performance of their duty, you will acknowledge that the work of righteousness and impartial justice is one of the fruits of faith.

(3) They "obtained promises." That is, they obtained the fulfilment of the promises which were made particularly unto themselves: as

it was promised to Joshua that he should conquer Canaan,—to Gideon, that he should defeat the Midianites,—and to David, that he should be the King of all Israel. And they are said to "obtain these promises," because of the difficulty that was in their accomplishment—sometimes the seeming impossibility. How often was the faith of Joshua tried in the conquest of Canaan; yet at length he took the whole land, according to the word of the Lord. How improbable did victory appear to Gideon, when he was commanded with 300 men to attack the hosts of the enemy, which "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude;" and yet he obtains the promise of their destruction. And you know for how long a time, and in what various ways the faith of David was tried before the promise given to him was fulfilled.

(4) They "stopped the mouths of lions." This Samson did when at the vineyards of Timnath a young lion roared against him, and when "the Spirit of the Lord came so mightily upon him that he rent it as he would have rent a kid, though he had nothing in his hand." This did David, when, as he kept his father's sheep, there

came a lion and took a lamb out of the flock, and the youthful shepherd "went out against him, and caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him." Or, if "stopping the mouths of lions" be taken to signify the putting a restraint upon them, so that they shall neither hurt nor devour, this may be applied to the Prophet Daniel. It is said of him expressly, when he was cast into the den of lions, that "God sent His angel, and shut the mouths of the lions, that they did not hurt him." And though the ministry of angels was used in doing this, yet was the miracle performed, "because he believed in His God."

(5) They "quenched the violence of fire." Not, "quenched the fire," which may be done by natural means; but "quenched the violence of fire,"—that is, restrained its power,—as effectually as if the fire itself had been utterly extinguished. This was literally accomplished in the case of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who for their faithfulness to God, and refusing to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up, were cast into a burning fiery furnace. The fire still retained its power of destroying, for it slew the men who threw them

into the flames. But through faith its violence was quenched; for the fire had "no power upon their bodies, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

(6) They "escaped the edge of the sword." That is, in their flight from danger, God was present with them for their deliverance and preservation. This was proved in the history of David, when he fled from the sword of Saul; and in the history of Elijah, when he was threatened to be slain by Jezebel.

(7) "Out of weakness were made strong." This may refer to infirmity either of mind, or body: to the want of moral courage in those who were required to encounter danger for God's sake; or to the want of physical strength in those who were suffering from disease. Many instances will occur to you in which God inspired His servants with the courage requisite to the occasion, and as many in which the sick were restored, so that it could be said of them as it was of blind Bartimæus, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

(8) Through faith "waxed valiant in fight." This may be applied to many of them: as

Joshua, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and to David, who says of himself that God "taught his hands to war," and "did gird him with strength unto battle."

(9) They "turned to flight the armies of the aliens." The word translated "armies" more literally means, "a camp," or the fortified tents of an army. The Apostle alludes to the overthrow of God's enemies by those mighty men of old whom He had appointed to lead out the armies of His people to victory. I need do no more than allude to them: your own minds will supply the names.

I pause here to remark how admirably calculated were these illustrious examples of the power of faith to make a deep impression on the minds of the Hebrews, and animate them to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." And let me also remind you that all these things are written for our learning; and that we, too, may derive many a useful lesson from such high examples. But perhaps you will say that these worthies were men so far above you in grace, that they cannot be taken as your models and examples. Not so, dear brethren: they were men like you; like you in

nature; like you in temptation; like you in motive; like you in weakness. Therefore with similar assistance you may do great things like them. The Apostle James uses this argument, when he would stir us up to prayer. Having assured us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," he quotes Elias, who by his prayer shut and opened the heavens, so that they withheld or gave the rain. And whereas it might be urged that we are neither like Elias, nor our prayers like his, he anticipated such an objection by affirming that he "was a man subject to like passions as we are." It was not of his merit, but of God's grace, fulfilling His own promises to prayer: and by the same grace we shall have the same success. You are weak, frail, infirm. True indeed. But so were these saints, who form "the great cloud of witnesses." By nature they were, like us, incapable of running the race or winning the fight. To "the weak," if they have trusting faith, is the grace given which enables them to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong." To them belongs the assurance, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation,

also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Call to mind those martyrs of the early Church, who sustained the most cruel tortures with a courage more than human, while they were "made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions." Look at the saints enumerated in the verses following the text, who "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: who were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who were tempted, who were slain with the sword: and wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." All these were by nature weak as you. And by the grace of God you may become strong as they,—those faithful ones who "counted not their lives dear," so that they might only "witness a good confession,"—who sealed their doctrine with their blood, and walked to the stake, or ascended the scaffold, or bowed their heads beneath the axe, not only with resignation, but with joy and transport and triumph, singing amid their sufferings that fine Christian hymn: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken;

cast down, but not destroyed." You may not have the miraculous aids afforded to those worthies mentioned in the chapter before us, for whom the course of nature was sometimes reversed, while they walked in the depths of the sea, or threw down the walls of cities by the blowing of trumpets, or shut the mouths of lions, or quenched the violence of fire; but you will have the needful strength to do all that God calls you to do: and grace is beyond all gifts. We might perform all these wonderful deeds, and yet not be heirs of the grace of life. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

We may have far better gifts than miraculous endowments unsanctified. We may have the wisdom, power, and unction of the Holy Ghost: and the prayer of faith will secure all these. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Let us be in earnest

in seeking, and God will be faithful in giving: He will bestow power for service, and grace to help in every time of need. He will establish our souls, when wavering, confirm our feeble knees, and make us "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Let the prayer of earnest hearts be, "Lord increase our faith;" and God will prove to us that "all things are possible to him that believeth."

And let vigilance be joined to prayer. Yield not to love of ease, nor be weary in well-doing. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith; quit you like men, be strong." Thus will you be enabled to "subdue kingdoms,"—even to master evil passions and desires, to vanquish the lusts which you have learned to hate, and overcome the habits which have hitherto led you captive. "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city." You will "work righteousness." Be true, and honest, and just, and upright, and pure; scorning all that is opposed to integrity, and conforming to that golden law of love which teaches us to do unto others as we wish to be done by. You will "obtain promises;" and whilst exercising faith in God's word, will find that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass

than for one jot or one tittle of the law to fail." You will "stop the mouths of lions," and "quench the violence of fire." By giving no offence in anything, by patience under unkindness, by forbearance, meekness, and gentleness, you will "overcome evil with good;" and by "heaping coals of fire" upon his head, melt down your enemy with love. You will "escape the edge of the sword;" for if you trust in Him God can "make even your enemies to beat peace with you," and can deliver you from the hand of every foe. "Out of weakness you will be made strong:" "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might;" so valiant in the fight that you shall be able to say, in humble faith: "Though an host shall encamp against me, yet shall I not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Yes: and you will "turn to flight the armies of the aliens." "Resisting the devil, he will flee from you; manfully fighting against the world and the flesh, they will retreat, baffled and subdued. And think of what is to follow when the strife and struggle shall be past, the pain and wrestling terminates. Think of the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Think of "the great cloud of witnesses,"

from whose cheeks the stains of weeping are wiped away, on whose robes the marks of the conflict unto blood are no longer visible. These summon us from their resting places on the far side of Jordan, to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

And after you have resisted flesh and blood, and wrestled against principalities and powers," —after you have "run the race,"—after you have "finished your course with joy,"—the inheritance of faith shall be yours. The Saviour's approving welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servant," placing us at the right hand of His glory;—the glory that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man." God grant that we may obtain it! God grant that we may be found among those "thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," who stand before Him, and cast their crowns at His feet, crying continually, "Salvation unto God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

XIX.

Faith's Conquests.

"Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."—HEBREWS xi. 35—38.

THE Apostle had recorded the active triumphs of faith. He had shown how faith lies at the root of all that is noble and lofty and brave. He now passes on from those who had wrought mighty deeds through faith, to those who endured sufferings of every kind under its support. Having shown to the Hebrews what faith will do when men are called to perform, he now shows what it will do when men are called to endure. And he

had an object in this. The condition of the Hebrews, whom he is addressing, was one of poverty and persecution, and exposure to suffering, because of their embracing the truth. It was well for them to know what faith could do for those who were in danger of being oppressed, and tortured and slain. And he adduces a number of examples, all bearing testimony to the power of faith in preserving the souls of believers under the greatest sufferings to which human nature can be exposed. "Women," he says, "received their dead raised to life again."

He refers probably to the dead child of the widow of Zarephath, and of the Shunammite woman who had been raised to life, respectively by the hands of Elijah and Elisha. And now he tells us of others who "looked for a better resurrection" than theirs; a resurrection not to this present mortal life, but to that life over which death has no power. The resurrection from the grave to eternal life was an object of faith to the worthies of old: and the sufferers to whom the Apostle alludes were animated to endurance by this hope; and their heroic deaths thus regarded prove that "faith," according to

St. Paul's definition, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

It may be observed that the Apostle takes most of his examples from the time of the persecution of the Jewish Church under Antiochus, the King of Syria, in the days of the Maccabees. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection." The word translated "tortured," means literally "racked," "stretched out," and is especially applied to that kind of torture in which criminals were stretched on a wheel. It sometimes also signifies the instrument which was employed in beating those to death who were fastened to this engine of torment. Allusion is here supposed to be made to Eleazar, whose story is given in the 2nd Book of the Maccabees, and who was beaten to death because he refused to transgress the law of His God at the command of the cruel tyrant. His tormentors offered him deliverance if he would renounce his religion; but he boldly refused, and resolved to endure the utmost extremity of torture rather than turn idolator and disobey his God. It is supposed that reference is made also to that noble woman and her seven sons, whose story, recorded in the same

Book, is the following: The barbarous Antiochus seized on a mother and her seven sons, and determined by whips and scourges to force them to break one of the commands of the Jewish Law. The command was to eat swine's flesh. They refused. The eldest of the seven unshrinkingly proclaimed his readiness to die for his religion. The King, enflamed with rage, commanded the brazen cauldrons to be made hot, and ordered him to be flayed alive,—his tongue to be torn out, the extremities of his limbs to be cut off, in presence of his mother and brethren, and his body while yet living to be cast into one of the burning cauldrons. And though such a spectacle might well have shaken the fortitude of the survivors, it only served to strengthen their courage. They animated one another to a heroic death, affirming that God would support them through the fearful trial. The second of these brothers, the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, were put to the same torture, and endured it in the presence of their mother. And how, think you, did she conduct herself in this bitter trial? Did nature, triumphing over grace, impel her to preserve one at least of her children, that he might console her for the loss of the other six?

No! for when the King bade her counsel her youngest and remaining son to turn from the laws of his fathers, and thus save his life, she bowed herself down before that son, and thus addressed him: "O my son, have pity upon me that bare thee, and gave thee suck, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age; fear not the tormentor, but being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy, with thy brethren."

So steadfast, my brethren, were this mother and her sons in their attachment to the true faith. They did not "fear him" who could "kill the body," and do no more; but they "feared Him who could kill both body and soul in hell." And the ground of their steadfastness in their profession and under their tortures was: "that they might obtain a better resurrection." One of the brothers already alluded to, affirmed expressly that he endured these torments, and death itself, because he believed that God would raise him up at the last day. This the Apostle calls "a better resurrection," not only as being better than the "deliverance" which was offered, but because he has respect unto that "better resurrection" which is unto life eternal. "Many

of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

In the 36th verse the Apostle brings before us those who suffered, not by tortures, nor unto death, yet in such a way that their faith was greatly tried. "Others had trial of," or were tried by, "cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." This verse refers to those who patiently endured the contumely and scorn of the world, whilst they were reproached for the name of Christ. Such "mockings" are recorded in all the stories of persecutions and sufferings endured by the Church. The world is never better pleased than when it can invent reproachful names and opprobrious terms to cast upon the Lord's people. Nor is there, perhaps, any form of suffering harder to bear. It entered largely into the sorrows endured by our blessed Lord, "who when He was reviled, reviled not again." They pointed at Him the finger of scorn. They said, "He hath a devil and is mad;" "He is a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. "We read of His being "mocked" by the Jews, and likewise by Herod and his men of war. St. Peter reckons

this among the "fiery trials" which are to try the children of God, and says, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." But the Apostle says that to these "mockings" sometimes "scourgings" were added,—an exceedingly shameful as well as painful punishment, extended only on the vilest persons, as slaves and criminals. St. Paul informs us that he himself "five times received forty stripes, save one," and that "thrice he was beaten with rods."

It is added, that these martyrs "had trial of bonds and imprisonment;" that is, their persecutors threw them into dungeons, loaded them with shackles and fetters, "fed them with the bread of affliction, and with the water of affliction," as Ahab did to the Prophet Micaiah. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins, and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

"They were stoned." This was a punishment appointed by the law for blasphemers, idolaters, false prophets, and for similar profaners of the true

religion. But it was also inflicted by the wicked on the innocent saints of God. Thus Naboth was put to death by the command of Jezebel, and Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, by the order of Joash. In this manner was the blood of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, shed, and our Saviour reproaches the Jews with "stoning the prophets" whom God sent to reprove them for their sins.

"They were sawn asunder." A tradition among the Jews says that Isaiah suffered this kind of martyrdom; but St. Paul no doubt refers to many other saints whose names are not recorded.

It is added, "They were tempted." This expression may denote the temptation wherewith these holy men were assailed by their persecutors with the design of inducing them to renounce their religion. It belongs to the malice and craft of the devil and his instruments to work upon human frailty by persuading men to escape suffering by renouncing their profession. Well, therefore, may this be reckoned among their trials, and the overcoming such a temptation among the triumphs of faith. And therefore it is an especial promise of our Lord Jesus Christ

that when persecution cometh, He will "keep" His own people "from the hour and power of temptation. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. iii. 10).

"They were slain with the sword." This may refer to those holy martyrs who were brought up before magistrates and rulers; and being proceeded against in the form of law, were unjustly put to death for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. Or it may mean the sword of violence, when persecutors in their rage fell upon and destroyed multitudes by the sword on account of their profession. Thus Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord; and we read of many who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," among whom were John the Baptist and the Apostle James.

The latter part of the verse gives us an account of others, who, although they escaped the fury of their adversaries, yet gave their testimony unto the truth by enduring that share of suffering which God called them to. "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins." They went

about from place to place, with scarcely enough clothing to protect them from the inclemency of the weather, being driven from their homes by violence, and compelled to seek a refuge from the cruelty of men in wild and desolate places. They were poor men, wandering up and down in slender raiment, outcasts from their homes, exiles from their country.

They were "destitute:" without friends or habitation, bereft not only of the comforts but also the necessaries of life.

"Afflicted,"—that is, brought into great straits through pressing dangers, and overcome with many sorrows.

"Tormented." In this wandering condition they met with evil treatment from the world. They were oppressed and worn down with many calamities. They had to endure multiplied griefs and much hardship: were obliged to undergo "weariness, and painfulness, and watchings," and to be often in hunger and thirst, in fasting, in cold, and nakedness, and want.

The Apostle now proceeds to tell us what kind of persons these were who thus suffered. The world treated them as heinous offenders: but the world knew them not, even as they

knew Him not. "Of whom," he says, "the world was not worthy." "They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

By "the world" are to be understood those who are not Christ's,—those who live for the present and disregard the future, who fix all their hopes, and affections, and desires on the life that now is, forgetful of that which is to come. Of this world the apostle declares that it was not worthy of these sufferers. The world deemed them unworthy: it condemned them; it was thus proved that they were not of the world. "Had they been of the world, the world would have loved its own; but because they were not of the world, but the Lord had chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hated them." But this was their blessedness. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." God reverses the judgment of men. The great, the mighty, the wealthy, the rulers of the world, were "not worthy" of such as in their days were poor, destitute, despised, wanderers in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Truly, "God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, neither are God's ways as man's ways." The world hated them; God loved them. The world mocked them; God honoured them. And they "chose the good part." "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." "He shall bring forth their judgment as the light, and their righteousness as the noon-day." It shall come to pass, when the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, that they who were "despised and rejected of men," like their great Master, shall be acknowledged before the congregated universe as the children of the Highest; while they who persecuted and reviled them shall themselves be the objects of "shame and everlasting contempt." Yes, they who had to seek shelter from the rage and fury of men,—who had to hide themselves in dens and caves, in mountains and uninhabited wastes, exposed to suffering, poverty, danger,—shall be exalted to the right hand of God, and inhabit those "many mansions" which Christ has gone to prepare for them that love Him. There "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall

feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

And now we may well consider the Apostle's intention in bringing before the Christian Church the illustrious deeds and terrible sufferings of these worthies of old. Did he intend that these noble records should be read and forgotten? No: they were to inspire the Church with confidence and courage; they were to sustain her under trial and persecution. These things, brethren, are written for our learning. They are to awaken a holy emulation: what through faith has been achieved may be achieved again. What through faith has been endured may be endured again. We are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The memory of the sainted dead is to stimulate our enthusiasm, and to sustain our energy. What was possible for these heroes of the olden time is possible for us. We through faith can vindicate by our obedience and submission the authority of God, and show forth the beauty of holiness. And though our names may not be inscribed on the illustrious roll of the mighty

and the renowned, we may so live as to honour God in our day and generation, and to be numbered amongst those just men who "shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

And let us in our battle with opposing powers remember that we do not wage a doubtful conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The saints of every generation tell us that we are on the winning side. We succeed to their inheritance of faith and victory. If we are ever tempted to feel disheartened, we can turn our eyes to the great "cloud of witnesses," and look upon "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," "the glorious company of the Apostles," "the noble army of martyrs." These have fought and overcome, these have wrestled, and have been crowned, these have been "faithful unto death," and will in due time "receive the crown of life." We, too, through God's help, may pass, "more than conquerors," across the narrow stream that separates the Church militant from the Church triumphant. Why should we fear? We fight under the same Captain; are bidden to take the same armour; are exhorted to trust in the same God. He that is for us is greater than all that be against us. His power waneth not.

His arm wearieth not. His love changeth not. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." His willingness to save is proved by His descent from heaven, and by His "obedience unto death. even the death of the cross." It was the eternal purpose of Him "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," to "bring many sons unto glory." His purpose shall be fulfilled. In saving the Church, He has magnified all His attributes; has made known His manifold wisdom; has revealed the riches of His grace; has vindicated the character of that law which was the deliberate expression of His mind; and at the same time shown His infinite compassion for the sinful and the guilty. And inasmuch as I see in the salvation of His elect the fulfilment of an everlasting purpose, I feel assured that not one link in that golden chain which binds a believer to the throne of God shall ever be broken,—the chain whose highest link is in the eternal purpose of Jehovah: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also

justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

So then each one of His people may confidently say, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

XX.

Faith's Crown.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." —HEBREWS xi. 39, 40.

THERE is a little obscurity about these words. It will, however, vanish before a careful examination of the apostle's statement. Those who "obtained a good report through faith," he says, "received not the promises, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

One obvious meaning of the passage is this, —that the patriarchs, and prophets, and holy men of old (the worthies in this "Roll-call of Faith"), who had waited through the centuries for the kingdom of God, and whose faith never failed, did not actually receive the great promise on which their hearts rested,—the coming of the

Saviour. No real sacrifice for sin had been offered; no atonement for guilt had been effected. The Holy Ghost had not descended. Nothing had been "made perfect" *on earth* till Christ came; for "the law was but a shadow of good things to come." Nothing had been "made perfect" *in heaven* till Christ came; for the heavenly places and things had not been "purified by the better sacrifice" offered for sin upon His cross. Till the birth, and death, and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, no place in the many mansions of His Father's house had been prepared for His people. The promise fulfilled to us in the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus, brought to them that which they had waited for so long.

But there is another sense in which it may be said that those who are with Christ cannot be "made perfect without us." Let us look at this.

At the very threshold of my subject we are met by the question: "What was the promise, which it is said the Old Testament saints did not receive?" They *had* received the *word* in which the promise was conveyed. For it is especially said of Abraham in the seventeenth

verse: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promise offered up his only begotten son." St. Paul, when he witnessed a good confession before Agrippa and Bernice, spake thus: "Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come; for which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" The Apostle declares that "the resurrection of the dead" was "the promise made of God unto the Fathers." Whilst it cannot be denied that the promise of God had respect generally to the advent of Christ, and the redemption He was to accomplish, it would appear that the Apostle's mind rested on that part of the promise into which was gathered the great hope for which he was called in question, —"the resurrection of the dead." This was the promise which the Old Testament saints who "obtained a good report through faith," never received. The resurrection, if not so clearly revealed under the old covenant as under the

new, was nevertheless the crowning hope of the Jew. David says, "My flesh also shall rest in hope." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." Isaiah said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." And Hosea has this magnificent prophecy: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes." And when Jesus comforted Martha with the assurance that her brother would rise again, she answered, "I know that he shall rise again at the last day." They had the *words* of the promise. But though they received the promise, they received not *the thing promised.* They all died; their bodies were carried to the burial, and for them the promise of the resurrection has not yet received its accomplishment. Their flesh is resting in hope; their spirits are with Christ in the separate state. They are waiting till His voice calls their bodies from the grave, and clothes them with their house which is from heaven.

The same may be said of all who have died in faith. The patriarchs do not stand alone in their non-admission to the enjoyment of the promises. Priests and Prophets of the Old Testament are one with them in this; so are the Apostles and Saints of the New; indeed, believers of every age since then are on a level with them here. Those who "die in the Lord" now are in a similar condition: they are "not yet clothed upon." God in His wisdom has withheld the fulfilment of His resurrection promise until now; and will withhold it until that sublime day when "death shall be swallowed up in victory. And though all that are saved through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, are privileged to anticipate a time when "the last enemy shall be destroyed;" yet must it be said of them, as one after another they depart to be with Christ, as it was said of patriarchs, and prophets, and martys, and worthy men of old: That "though they obtain a good report through faith, yet they receive not the promise."

Having so far endeavoured to explain the meaning of this passage, let me now turn your thoughts to the reason assigned by the Apostle why those who "obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

But you may ask, Are not those who have "fallen asleep in Jesus" already "perfected"? Have they not entered into a bright world where are joys which must be possessed before they can be imagined,—a sorrowless, a sinless world, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest"? It is true, my brethren, that they have: and we thank God for revealing to us this gracious truth. A voice from heaven comes with a deep melodious utterance to our ears: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours." No sooner is "the silver cord loosed" and "the golden bowl broken," than the spirit, released from all its sin and sorrow, passes into the immediate presence of Christ; a new face before the throne of God,—a new voice added to the choirs of Paradise,—another sinner redeemed from earth. But if such be the condition of the blessed and holy dead, with what justice can it be said that "they are not made perfect"? My reply is, that although their bliss is perfect of its kind, when

the soul is absent from the body, there is a higher bliss to be obtained when body and soul are re-united. The Scripture warrants us in maintaining that the happiness of the righteous will not reach its consummation till the resurrection of the just,—till the corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the mortal be clothed with immortality. It is, accordingly, on the second coming of Christ that inspired writers love to dwell, and on which they fasten the hopes of their converts. It is with this thought that St. Paul consoles the sorrowing Thessalonians: "I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

And when we find the sacred writers placing prominently before the minds of the early Christians the blessedness to be attained at the first resurrection, we may justly infer that they knew the intermediate state to be imperfect, and felt that the happiness of the righteous would not be perfected till they received that which they were

waiting for,—"the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." And thus when the text affirms that "God has provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," it casts no doubt on the happiness of the separate state; it implies only that believers when they depart, "to be with Christ," are in a less glorious and less blessed condition than they will be when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise," and "mortality shall be swallowed up of life." Their souls are at once in possession of the joys which mortal eye hath not seen; but there remains a step further to complete their happiness.

There is something very beautiful in the thought "that they without us are not to be made perfect." It seems to tell us that the family in heaven is not so far separated from us in hope and expectation as we sometimes imagine. The hope of each is the same. In this the Church triumphant and the Church militant are one. The "great cloud of witnesses" are eagerly longing for that "manifestation of the sons of God," for which "the whole creation groaneth;" they are eagerly

looking for the hour when the trumpet-blast of the archangel shall herald the destruction of death, and "put a new song into their mouth, even thanksgiving to our God," in that He has "redeemed them from death, and ransomed them from the power of the grave." And as our hope is the same, so is our prayer. I count it a wondrous thought that as the company of weeping mourners gather together in the churchyard to render the last offices to one whom they have loved, and to commit the body to the ground, "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," the fervent prayer of the bereaved on earth is echoed back by the thrilling cry of the ransomed in heaven. You well know the beautiful words which our Church has provided to be used at the grave of the dead: "We beseech Thee of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom; that we, with all those that have departed in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And what is the thrilling cry with which "the spirits of the just" make heaven ring as

they wait until the mystery of redemption is accomplished? For the martyrs and confessors, though in bliss, are waiting for the coming of the Lord, without which they cannot be perfect. This is a cry that has ever been going up before God since Stephen fell; but it waxes louder and gathers strength as the ages run on. They cry with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And what is the answer? This: "They must rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren that shall be killed as they were, shall be fulfilled." And what is this but an illustration of the Apostle's words on the text, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"?

Now you will have gathered from my foregoing remarks the perfect sympathy in their hopes which exists between that part of the family of God which has already crossed the swelling flood and entered into rest, and that part which has still to endure the heat and burden of the day, and to maintain a hard fight with the

enemy. And you will also have gathered that the "better thing" which "God has promised for us" is the resurrection from the dead.

Let us look at this truth a little in detail. "As in Adam all die," says the Apostle, "even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order,—Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." All who have died in the Lord shall at the moment of Christ's second coming, and at the blast of the trumpet blown by the archangel, rise together from the grave; and, receiving resurrection bodies fashioned after the likeness of their Redeemer, shall enter with Him into "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The saints of the antediluvian dispensation cannot receive their resurrection glory without the saints of the Levitical, nor these without the kings and prophets of a later economy; nor these without the Apostles and martyrs of the New Testament days; nor these without the righteous who have lived and died since; nor they without us; nor we without those who are yet to be saved, until the whole number of the elect shall be accomplished. Only when the purpose of God in the election

of grace is completed, and the mystery of redemption is accomplished; only when the Church, without an absent member, shall stand up perfected in its glorious Head, Christ Jesus, —only *then*, and not till then, shall there be full perfection for every single member of the body. One member cannot be perfected, save in the perfection of the whole. The earlier and the later believers must be glorified together, inasmuch as they are chosen to be but "one body in Christ," and neither of them can reach their perfect state of grace and glory until the first resurrection: when *they* shall not prevent *us*, nor *we them;* but as soon as the trumpet summons the dead to rise, in the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall the living be changed, and all "be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall they ever be with the Lord."

And is there not something heart-stirring in the thought, that as soon as the Lord Himself shall appear in the clouds of heaven, the millions upon millions of His people who have died in the faith, or are living in the faith, shall be changed into His glorious image, and shall enter with Him into the kingdom of His father, where

they shall shine forth as the sun "for ever and ever." Thank God that He has given us such a blessed hope as this. Thank God that He permits us to anticipate such a glorious re-union of His people as lifts the soul out of its littleness, and out of the comparative selfishness of its own individual happiness, and points it onward to the day of Christ's coming, and the ingathering of all His people. What a day of wonder! What a day of glory shall that be when the Lord shall come to "make up His jewels,"—when He shall collect together in one the whole multitude of His redeemed; "saying to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from afar, my daughters from the ends of the earth." Abel, the first martyr; Enoch, who walked with God; and Jacob who wrestled with Him, and Isaiah who spake of Christ's glory, and John the beloved disciple, and Mary of Bethany who sat at His feet, and Mary the mother of our Lord, and Mary Magdalene who was first at the sepulchre,—and all who passed through the great tribulation, and all the holy ones of God. Oh, shall the student in earthly lore long for companionship with those of mankind who have been the acknowledged masters

of art and science,—with poets who have swept the chords to noble themes, or with philosophers who have led the way to the discovery of splendid truths? And shall not the heart of the believer be filled with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," in the prospect of communing with Abraham the father of the faithful, and Moses, who talked with God on the mount till his face shone, and with David the shepherd-king, whose psalms attune the soul to the loftiest emotions; with prophets whose word laid open futurity; with martyrs who died for the truth; with Apostles who knew our Lord in the flesh, and all of whom shall return in the light and blessedness of the returning Son of man, Christ Jesus,—the head and centre of all? Yes, my brethren, and we shall meet also some who have claims not only on our memory, but our love; who are resting now from all their labours, and waiting in blissful expectation for the day when the new creation shall be accomplished, and the mystic body of the Lord Jesus Christ shall stand up in perfection in the likeness of the Son of God. They have been taken from us; they have passed within the veil, and are hidden for a little season out of our sight. To many the

grave has become the home of their buried affections, for it has closed upon all that was held most dear. But blessed is the thought, and full of unmingled joy, that those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, long, as fellow-members of the same mystical body with ourselves, even as we do, for the perfect glorification of the whole; for that time when there shall be a re-union with those held dearest upon earth, and partings shall be known no more: no graves shall be dug, no tears shall be shed, for "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; sorrow and sighing shall flee away;" and "the days of their mourning shall be ended."

And when the glories of the resurrection morning have burst upon this toiling and travailing earth, and the elect of all dispensations, and ages, and climes, have been brought into close association, as members of the same body and branches of the same vine; when the glorious company of the Apostles, "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," "the noble army of martyrs," and the saints of every kindred, and people, and tongue are gathered together before the ever-

lasting throne, *then* we shall be fully able to grasp the heights and depths of the reason given by St. Paul why they who "obtained a good report through faith did not receive the promise: namely, because "God had provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Brethren, if the Hebrew believers were to be animated by remembering the acts and sufferings of olden worthies,—if they were to draw courage and hope from the example of the "great cloud of witnesses," so are we. The faith, the endurance, the heroism of the great and good, is to excite in us a holy ambition. The memory of their triumphs is to stimulate us. Our heart is to yearn for fellowship with those who were so noble in their lives, and so illustrious in their deaths. They are waiting for their "perfection," until we and the whole Church have obtained ours,— "until we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." From their resting-places they are witnesses to the truth that God is faithful. They tell us how they were nerved by faith to "suffer the loss of all things" for Christ's

sake, and the Gospel's; and to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." They summon us by the noble things which they wrought, and the terrible things which they endured, not to be slothful, but "to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Let not these spirits of the righteous speak in vain. Let us give ear to the inspiriting call which comes from those departed saints who are now resting from their labours in the deep repose of the paradise of God. The call comes from patriarchs, and prophets, and priests; from heroes who "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire;" from men who struggled with evil, and dared the rage of persecution; from women who received their dead raised to life again, and men "tortured, not accepting deliverance;" and all of whom are witnesses to the power of faith, and the faithfulness of God.

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto

Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

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